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Charles Lamb.

From the engraving by Henry Meyer.

MEMOIRS

OF

CHARLES LAMB

BY

SIR THOMAS NOON TALFOURD, D.C.L.

ONE OF HIS EXECUTORS

EDITED AND ANNOTATED

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A., F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF 'CHARLES LAMB, HIS HOMES, HIS HAUNTS, AND HIS BOOKS,' ETC.

WITH PORTRAITS

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INTRODUCTION.

LAMB is a writer whose merit has been but tardily recognised. Talfourd's admirable and dramatic "Life" was intended rather as an account of the sad story of the struggles of an interesting literary man. It was issued in 1838, the "Final Memorials" in 1843; and though much interest was excited by their publication, it cannot be said that there was any very hearty appreciation of Lamb's rare gifts as a writer until many years later. The Americans may be said to have taken the lead in this cordial recognition. Not content with relishing his "official" writings, they set the example of diligently collecting all his scattered essays, and even his most careless scraps: and, though these were of unequal merit, they were much enjoyed, and perhaps of the same quality as his best work. But during the last thirty years, this engaging writer has enjoyed the fullest and increasing recognition and popularity. Editions of all kinds have multiplied. His writings have been edited, and collected again and again; there have been dainty little editions of his "Essays," and even what is called an "edition of luxury" which seems to suit their tranquil ruminative character

about as little as its modern dress did the reprinted old Burton folio, which Lamb himself described as "heartless." This supplying illustrations of localities, buildings, &c., imparted somewhat too concrete and literal a tone.

I feel pleasure in thinking that in a small way I contributed to this revival, having nearly thirty years ago issued a volume entitled "Charles Lamb, his Homes, his Haunts, and his Books," which was very cordially received. I may also claim to have made the first full and regular collection of Lamb's letters, and of his other writings, to which Talfourd's memoir was prefixed, and which was issued in six volumes about the year 1876. It was stereotyped, and there have been several issues during the past years. In the same year, Mr Charles Kent prepared for Messrs. Routledge a compact and convenient edition of Lamb's writings, excluding the letters, prefixing to each essay or paper a short account of its history, an explanation of the allusions, initials, &c. This edition was valuable for at least two interesting contributions to Lamb's history, for an extract from the Temple Register of the births of the Lamb family, and the true story of Barbara S——, supplied to the editor in person by the veteran actress Miss Kelly, herself the heroine. This little narrative must have given genuine pleasure to all lovers of Elia.

At this moment, I do not know of any one now alive who had known or spoken to Charles Lamb, though it is not quite sixty years since his death. It is a pleasant thing, however, to have talked of him with his friends, to have pressed hands that have shaken his. The late Mr John Forster, and Mr Procter, have often spoken to me of their departed friend, while Mr Allsop furnished me with letters which he had received from him. The

Cowden Clarkes are dead. Mr Forster attended Lamb's funeral, and I have seen the tears fill his eyes, coming from his honest, trusty heart, as he turned over the old letters, and faltered out, "Poor Charles Lamb!" Mr Procter, whom I well knew, at one time corresponded with me as to his account of Lamb which he was about publishing. He and his friends pressed me much to postpone my little book on the subject, but it was too late.

Since those days, what may be called the Lamb literature, in the shape of criticisms, collections, lives, &c., has increased to large proportions. So diligent has been the exertion of explorers, that some pieces, thought to have disappeared, or to be apocryphal, have been recovered. Much ingenuity and labour have been expended in this interesting pursuit; one long lost copy of the "Poetry for Children" was actually unearthed in some distant colony to great rejoicing. A few lines, quoted by Elia at the end of one of his essays, described a boy snatching "a fearful joy" from reading at a stall. This he quoted as the work of a poet of the day, but a critic sagaciously suggested that it was one of his favourite artful devices for veiling the authorship. It was in fact his sister's composition. Scattered little poems were found in a collection issued by the schoolmaster Mylius, and the indefatigable Mr Richard Herne Shepherd, who has written a useful bibliography of Lamb, contrived to bring together these fragments. The poetry for children, thus recovered, was reprinted for the curious amateur. During these latter years, however, yet another, and even, I think, a third copy, has turned up, which has been sold at auction for an enormous price.

Quite as rare a production of Lamb's, almost *introuvable*,

was the Devil's Walk," of which I have seen only a single copy, in the hands of Mr Payne, the translator of the Arabian Nights. By him it was reprinted in the Moxon collection of Lamb's writings. A casual allusion, in a letter or diary of Crabb Robinson's, set the collectors and explorers on a fresh literary chase. Every effort was made to recover "Prince Dorus," a fairy tale, and in due time these labours were rewarded, the little volume recovered and reprinted. Another fairy tale in verse, called "Beauty and the Beast," was issued by Godwin at his Juvenile Library. This, too, has been reprinted in a *de luxe* fashion, but no one who was familiar with Lamb's style could have any hesitation in rejecting it. It seems astonishing that Mr Andrew Lang should have accepted the office of introducing it to the public.

The latest, and admittedly the best, of Lamb's editors, is certainly Canon Ainger, who, after furnishing a short life of the essayist to the series of English Men of Letters was led by his studies to prepare a selection of his works, illustrated by notes and criticisms. No one could be better or so well fitted for the task, from a certain elegance of style, as well as from his hearty sympathy with his author, judiciously restrained, and never lapsing into hysterics.

And now arises an interesting question, namely, What should be the limits of selection, when the works and writings of great authors are collected after their death? Should everything they wrote be gathered up and reprinted, or only such productions as appear to the particular editor to be worthy of preservation? Canon Ainger, in his edition, seems to have been guided by a rule which he thinks must be conclusive, namely, to include such pieces only as the author himself had selected for preservation.

The fallacy here is the assumption that the author has discarded the rest of what he had written. But what ground is there for presuming that he would not have included these very pieces in some new and fresh miscellany? Lamb was likely enough to have merely selected what seemed to him the best for his immediate purpose. Then arises a more difficult question still. Should every scrap or fragment of every kind be collected, even such as the writer obviously produced for some ephemeral purpose, and which, to use Johnson's expression, had not "vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction"?

Of course, in the case of writers of ordinary pattern, it would be undesirable to preserve such trivialities; even in the instance of Thackeray and Dickens, there was much that was written for a mere temporary purpose, all the interest in which evaporated when the occasion passed by. Little, therefore, would be gained by retaining such pieces. It is different with a writer like Lamb, whose style is quite unique, and where, indeed, the species is the genus. Every "scrap," as it seems to me, written by him has special interest, quaintness, and piquancy, which we would be unwilling to let die.

Not less remarkable are the vast stores of letters that have come to light. When Talfourd issued his volumes, it was considered that a more than usually rich and abundant collection had been furnished. But since that time, an enormous number of letters have been discovered, the most important being those printed by Mr Kegan Paul in his life of Godwin, and the letters given in the Cowden Clarke recollections. At autograph sales, letters are constantly found. All these are of excellent quality—indeed, it may be said that Lamb never wrote a letter

that was not characteristic, or that was not in his best manner; or that did not contain something quaint or curious. The collection in my own edition comprised some four hundred and thirty-seven letters and notelets.

One of the most agreeable critical exercises, is the inquiry, In what consists the charm and attraction of Lamb's style? A superficial view might be that he modelled himself on his old Elizabethan favourites, and reproduced their common forms and expressions. The truth is, that from constant study and perusal, he had become so saturated with the spirit and thoughts of these ancients, that he could only express himself in their manner and phrases. Modern language and modern forms, he found, did not serve him; these failed to express what he desired. Certain antique but significant words he introduced with the happiest effect, and the reader finds him recurring to these with pleasure. Such, for instance, were "I do agnize," and more effective still, the happy term "arides me," for amuses or "tickles." These linger in the memory. There is no masquerading in this, of which it must be said, we have a suspicion in Mr Carlyle's tortuous Germanisms, and which are now found rather tedious. As a judicious critic has pointed out; "for genuine Anglicism, which, among all other essentials of excellence in our native literature, is now recovering itself from the leaden mace of the Rambler, he is quite a study, his prose is absolutely perfect, it conveys thought without smothering it in blankets." And how true, how forcible is this! for with him, style is but the expression of his thought, or the thought itself.

"But besides these quotations avowedly introduced as such, his style is full of quotations, held, if the expression may be allowed, in solution. One feels, rather than

recognises, that a phrase, particular or idiom, term, or expression, is an echo of something that one has heard or read before. This style becomes aromatic, like the perfume of faded rose-leaves in a china jar.

"But although Lamb's style is essentially the product of the authors he has made his own, nothing would be more untrue than to say of him that he read nature or anything else 'through the spectacles of books.' It is to his own keen insight and intense sympathy that we owe everything that is of value in his writing. His observation was his own, though when he gave it back into the world, the manner of it was the creation of his reading.

"There are two features, I think, of Lamb's method which distinguish him from so many humorists of to-day. He takes homely and familiar things, and makes them fresh and beautiful. The fashion of to-day is to vulgarise great and noble things in burlesque associations. The humorist's contrast is obtained in both cases."

Nothing is more difficult than to analyse any particular form of humour, and distinguish and contrast the methods of different writers. Addison, Fielding, Lamb, Dickens, Thackeray, all had a fashion or secret of their own, just as every painter sees the same object from a point of view of his own. In the case of Lamb, Canon Ainger helps us with this acute distinction. "What is the name," he asks, "for this antithesis of irony, this hiding of a sweet aftertaste in a bitter word? Whatever its name, it is a dominant flavour in Lamb's humour.

"But Lamb's wit, like his English, is Protean, and just as we think we have fixed its character and source, it escapes into new forms. In simile, he finds opportunity for it that is all his own. What wit, or shall wecall it

humour, is there in the gravity of his detail, by which he touches springs of delight, unreached even by Defoe or Swift, as in 'Roast Pig,' where he says that the father and son were summoned to take their trial at Pekin, 'then an inconsiderable assize town.' Or more delightful still, later on, 'Thus this custom of firing houses continued, till in process of time, says my manuscript, a sage arose like Mr Locke.' Or yet, once more, how exquisitely unforeseen and how rich in tenderness is the following remark as to the domestic happiness of himself and his cousin Bridget, in 'Mackery End': 'We are generally in harmony, with occasional bickerings, as it should be among near relations.'"

Perhaps the most delicately humorous and most original touches in Elia are to be found in his essay on the Burial Societies. After playing with his grim subject in his own style, though it must be confessed in places he becomes too elaborate and mechanical, he arrives at the possible hypothesis of the subscriber dying before being entitled to the benefit of his subscription. As a little exercise, the reader might here ask himself, what humorous complexion could he put on this, or what quip or turn could it suggest? He will then see how exquisitely droll is Elia's reflection. "One can hardly imagine," he says, "a more distressing case than that of a poor fellow lingering on in a consumption, till the period of his freedom is almost in sight, and then finding himself going with velocity, which makes it doubtful whether he shall be entitled to his funeral honours, his quota to which he nevertheless squeezes out, to the diminution of the comforts which sickness demands." Here we feel that this comic notion of a sick person's lamenting the loss of a profit which can only be secured by his death, is

not altogether far-fetched. Another of his speculations, on "The Melancholy of Tailors," offers the same quaint, nay, startling originality, and a view which would never have occurred to us. How rich, for instance, is his theory, so timorously suggested, as to the cause of this melancholy! "May it not be," he asks, "that the custom of wearing apparel, being derived by us from the Fall, and one of the most mortifying results of that unhappy event, a certain seriousness (to say no more of it) may, in the order of things, have been intended to be impressed upon the minds of this race of men, to keep up the memory of the first institution of clothes?"

Canon Ainger explains another "speciality" of Lamb, his curious perversion and disguising of real incidents, names, &c. "There was a certain waywardness or love of practical joking in Charles Lamb, that led him often to treat matters of fact with deliberate falsification. His essays are full of autobiography, but often purposely disguised, whether to amuse those who were in the secret, or to perplex those who were not, it is impossible to say.

"But apart from changes of names and incidents in his essays, there is in Lamb's humour the constant element of a mischievous love of hoaxing. He loves nothing so much as to mingle romance with reality, so that it shall be difficult for the reader to disentangle them. And besides these deliberate mystifications, there is found also in Lamb a certain natural incapacity for being accurate, an inveterate turn for the opposite."

I doubt, however, if Lamb had any such commonplace or obvious purpose as this. There was a more far-reaching *finesse* and delicacy involved, than a mere spirit of "hoaxing." His system was akin to that of the skilled novelist, who accepts a real character or incident for

treatment, but will make it *generic*, and discard what is not characteristic, and merely an accident, as in his beautiful story of "Barbara S." I am inclined to think too that he found his fancy kindled or stimulated by adopting some living type as a model, and which he could vary or develop.

One of the most favourite tributes to a deceased writer nowadays, is the tracing of him from place to place, with minute descriptions of the various houses in which he lived, a description often extended to the surrounding country. Pictures of the various localities and buildings are supplied, and the whole is usually entitled, "In the Footsteps of So-and-So." There is something attractive in this system, though the haunts and homes are daily passing away; and when the reader, inspired with a new-born enthusiasm, comes to inspect the building, he too often finds that it has been pulled down and cleared.

The Society of Arts, which places recording tablets on such houses, has perhaps indirectly contributed to their preservation, for the proprietors, from a sense of pride in having their walls thus garnished, are inclined to exert themselves to take care of it. Recently an admiring American has published a work of this kind, "In the Footsteps of Charles Lamb." But I confess this system appears to be too "pedagogic," and even earthy, and no fresh pleasure is conveyed by these researches.

To write a life of Lamb might fittingly engage the most finished pen of our times, and would require the most delicate touch and the finest critical appreciation. Yet even were such forthcoming, the fragmentary Life written by Sir Thomas Talfourd would still hold its place as the work of one who had been Lamb's friend and companion, and was himself no indifferent writer. Though

in parts a little inflated, its polished style will always please readers of taste; while the various painful episodes of Lamb's life are treated in excellent taste, and even with art. The biographical realism, as it is called, of our time, —a realism which so largely affects painting and poetry,— seems to require as great a collection as possible of interesting and detailed facts. Treated on such principles, the Life of Charles Lamb would leave a painful impression. Talfourd, his contemporary, was eminently suited for the task. In his hands all vulgar associations disappear. His style, too, reflects the literary tone of his day; and there is introduced a strain of allusion to literary fashions and manners quite in keeping with the subject of his story. His carefully studied periods seem to harmonize with Lamb's almost fastidious style.

The Memoir was issued in two portions—the first, in 1837, under the title of "Letters of Charles Lamb, *with a Sketch of his Life*"; the second, after an interval of eleven years, in 1848, under that of "Final Memorials of Charles Lamb; consisting chiefly of his Letters not before published, *with Sketches of some of his Companions*." The reason for this delay, it is explained in the Preface, was the delicate motive of not entering on the tragic side of Lamb's life, so long as his sister was alive. Her death removed the difficulty, while the scruples of persons who objected to having the letters in their possession published had given way. The author then explained that he intended his second portion to be, not so much a sequel, as a supplement, and that he was careful not to go over any ground that had been covered in the first part. He added that he had wished to combine both parts into one whole, but that he had forborne "out of consideration for the purchasers of the early volumes." It will also be

gathered from his second Preface that he was not at all content with the form of his work. Bearing this in mind, it did not seem improper to do what Talfourd himself was inclined to have done, viz. combine the two portions of the Memoir in one, dismissing only such short paragraphs as had been introduced to form a framework or introduction for the letters. That these were of no value or interest will be seen at once; the following being fairly selected specimens:—"The next is a short but characteristic letter to Manning;" "Here is a specimen of Lamb's criticism on Southey's poetical communications;" or such a passage as "Lamb then gives an account of his visit to an exhibition of snakes; of a frightful vividness and interesting, as all details of these fascinating reptiles are, whom we at once loathe and long to look upon, *as the old enemies and tempters of our race.*"

Having thus retained the old Memoir, it was easy to see that in many points of view it was incomplete, and passed over much that was important. These defects I have tried to supply by an abundance of notes, in which has been collected, with at least diligence, everything important relating to Lamb. A great deal of what I have added is new, and all, I hope, will be found interesting.

CHARLES LAMB.

CHAPTER I.

[1775 to 1796.]

Lamb's Parentage, School-days, and Youth.

Charles Lamb was born on 10th February,[1] 1775, in Crown Office Row,[2] in the Inner Temple, where he spent the first seven years of his life. His parents were in a humble station, but they were endued with sentiments and with manners which might well become the gentlest blood; and fortune, which had denied them wealth, enabled them to bestow on their children some of the happiest intellectual advantages which wealth ever confers. His father, Mr. John Lamb, who came up a little boy from Lincoln, fortunately both for himself and his master, entered into the service of Mr. Salt, one of the benchers of the Inner Temple, a widower, who, growing old within

[1] In his first edition, Talfourd gives the date as February 18th.—F.

[2] "On the ground floor, looking into Inner Temple Lane."—*Barron Field, Annual Obituary.*—F.

its precincts, was enabled to appreciate and to reward his devotedness and intelligence; and to whom he became, in the language of his son, "his clerk, his good servant, his dresser, his friend, his flapper, his guide, stop-watch, auditor, treasurer."[1] Although contented with his lot, and discharging its duties with the most patient assiduity, he was not without literary ambition; and having written some occasional verses to grace the festivities of a benefit society of which he was a member, was encouraged by his brother members to publish, in a thin quarto, "Poetical Pieces on several occasions." This volume contains a lively picture of the life of a lady's footman of the last century; the "History of Joseph," told in well-measured heroic couplets; and a pleasant piece, after the manner of "Gay's Fables," entitled the "Sparrow's Wedding," which was the author's favourite, and which, when he fell into the dotage of age, he delighted to hear Charles read.[2] His wife was a woman of appearance so matronly and commanding,

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[1] Lamb has given characters of his father (under the name of Lovel), and of Mr. Salt, in one of the most exquisite of all the Essays of Elia—"The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple."

[2] The following little poem, entitled "A Letter from a Child to its Grandmother," written by Mr. John Lamb for his eldest son, though possessing no merit beyond simplicity of expression, may show the manner in which he endeavoured to discharge his parental duties:—

"Dear Grandam,
Pray to God to bless
Your grandson dear, with happiness;
That, as I do advance each year,
I may be taught my God to fear;
My little frame from passion free,
To man's estate from infancy;

that, according to the recollection of one of Lamb's dearest schoolmates, "she might be taken for a sister of Mrs. Siddons." This excellent couple were blessed with three children, John, Mary,[1] and Charles; John being twelve and Mary ten years older than Charles. John, who is vividly described in the essay of Elia entitled "My Relations," under the name of James Elia, rose to fill a lucrative office in the South Sea House, and died a few years ago, having to the last fulfilled the affectionate injunction of Charles, "to keep the elder brother up in state." Mary (the Bridget of the same essay) still survives,[2] to mourn the severance of a life-long association, as free from every alloy of selfishness, as remarkable for moral beauty, as this world ever witnessed in brother and sister.

On the 9th of October, 1782, when Charles Lamb had attained the age of seven, he was presented to the school of Christ's Hospital,[3] by Timothy Yeates,

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From vice, that turns a youth aside,
And to have wisdom for my guide;
That I may neither lie nor swear,
But in the path of virtue steer;
My actions generous, firm, and just,
Be always faithful to my trust;
And thee the Lord will ever bless.
Your grandson dear,
JOHN L——, the Less."

[1] Mary-Anne was, properly speaking, her name.—F.

[2] Written in 1837.—F.

[3] Mr. Salt's interest was enough to secure this valuable privilege, though, as Talfourd says, he was presented by Timothy Yeates, one of the Governors of the Hospital. Lamb himself says the "Governor" who presented him resided "under the paternal roof," clearly pointing to Mr. Salt. The latter probably exerted his interest with Yeates. He

Governor, as "the son of John Lamb, scrivener, and Elizabeth his wife," and remained a scholar of that noble establishment till he had entered into his fifteenth year.[1]

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was admitted in a committee, on July 17th, 1782, "by a bond entered into by Samuel Salt, of the Inner Temple, London, Esquire." A petition had been sent in from his father, who set forth "that he had a wife and three children, and he finds it difficult to maintain and educate his family without some assistance." The admission was then merely formal, and he was not "clothed" as a Blue-coat boy until the 9th of October in the same year. I have been favoured with these extracts from the books of the Hospital, through the courtesy of the present Treasurer.—F.

[1] He was a sensitive child with a delicate temper, which seems to have been misunderstood or neglected by his parents. The eldest was the mother's favourite. "They loved pleasure, and parties, and visiting," he says in "Maria Howe;" "but as they found the tenor of my mind to be quite opposite, they gave themselves little trouble about me, but on such occasions left me to my choice, which was much oftener to stay at home, and indulge myself in my solitude, than join in their rambling visits." He found a friend in his old aunt, who was domiciled with them, and whom Mary long after thus recalled:—"My father had a sister lived with us—of course, lived with my Mother, her sister-in-law; they were, in their different ways, the best creatures in the world—but they set out wrong at first. They made each other miserable for full twenty years of their lives—my Mother was a perfect gentlewoman, my Aunty as unlike a gentlewoman as you can possibly imagine a good old woman to be; so that my dear Mother (who, though you do not know it, is always in my poor head and heart) used to distress and weary her with her incessant & unceasing attention and politeness, to gain her affection. The old woman could not return this in kind, and did not know what to make of it—thought it all deceit, and used to hate my Mother with a bitter hatred; which, of course, was soon returned with interest. A little frankness, and looking into each other's characters at first, would have spared all this, and they would have lived, as they died, fond of each other for the last few years of their lives. When we grew up and harmonized them a little, they sincerely loved each other."—*Letter of Mary Lamb*, given in Mr. Hazlitt's "Charles and Mary Lamb." This aunt clung to the

Small of stature, delicate of frame, and constitutionally nervous and timid, he would seem unfitted to encounter the discipline of a school formed to restrain some hundreds of lads in the heart of the metropolis, or to fight his way among them. But the sweetness of his disposition won him favour from all; and although the antique peculiarities of the school tinged his opening imagination, they did not sadden his

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child, saying, with some ungraciousness towards her hosts, it was the only thing in the world she loved. Her affection for the boy was constant—displayed when he was a wretched little sufferer from small-pox, when only five years old, at school, and later again under a terrible trial. But she unconsciously ministered to a diseased and morbid affection of his nature; and when actual derangement of mind came long after, it was easy to tell "when its first seeds were sown." "I was let grow up wild," he says, "like an ill-weed; and thrived accordingly. One night, that I had been terrified in my sleep with my imaginations, I got out of bed, and crept softly to the adjoining room. My room was next to where my aunt usually sat when she was alone. Into her room I crept for relief from my fears. The old lady was not yet retired to rest, but she was sitting with her eyes half open, half closed; her spectacles tottering upon her nose; her head nodding over her Prayer-book; her lips mumbling the words as she read them, or half read them, in her dozing posture; her grotesque appearance, her old-fashioned dress, resembling what I had seen in that fatal picture in Stackhouse. All this, with the time of night, joined to produce a wicked fancy in me, that the form which I beheld was not my aunt, but some witch. Her mumbling of her prayers confirmed me in this shocking idea. I had read in Glanvil of those wicked creatures reading their prayers *backwards;* and I thought that this was the operation which her lips were at this time employed about. Instead of flying to her friendly lap for that protection which I had so often experienced when I have been weak and timid, I shrunk back, terrified and bewildered to my bed, where I lay, in broken sleeps and miserable fancies, till the morning, which I had so much reason to wish for, came." From this morbid state he was rescued by a fortunate visit from his grandmamma, who carried him off to the country, down to Blakesmoor, where the change had the happiest effect. The good old lady had not

childhood. One of his schoolfellows, of whose genial qualities he has made affectionate mention in his "Recollections of Christ's Hospital," Charles V. Le Grice, now of Trereife, near Penzance, has supplied me with some particulars of his school-days, for which friends of a later date will be grateful. "Lamb," says Mr. Le Grice, "was an amiable gentle boy, very sensible and keenly observing, indulged by his school-

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only Charles, but her other grandchild Mary, often down on a visit. Her room in the house was the haunted one. Her recollection of the place affected her in the same mysterious way as it did her brother. She had to attend on the austere old lady, who every morning used to nod her head very kindly, and say very graciously, "How do you do, little Mary?"

There is another episode connected with these early days which is passed over by Talfourd. Charles and his sister were sent to a day-school, situated in the mean passage that leads from Fetter Lane into Bartlett's Buildings, and looking into a discoloured, dingy garden. It was presided over by a Mr. William Bird, teacher of languages and mathematics, who was assisted by a strange being, called "Captain Starkey," later to become a character. This oddity wrote an account of his own life, which Lamb happened to stumble upon, and the name awakened all his and his sister's slumbering recollections of their school days. "This, then," he said, "was the Starkey of whom I have heard my sister relate so many pleasant anecdotes, and whom, never having seen, I almost seem to remember. Heaven knows what 'languages' were taught in it then! I am sure that neither my sister nor myself brought any out of it but a little of our native English. By 'mathematics,' reader, must be understood 'ciphering.' It was, in fact, an humble day-school, at which reading and writing were taught to us boys in the morning; and the slender erudition was communicated to the girls, our sisters, etc., in the evening." Mr. Moxon speaks of an old schoolmistress:—"Well we remember the veneration with which we used to look upon the old lady—for she remembered Goldsmith! He had once lent her his poems to read. We often lament that he did not give them to her; but the author of the 'Vicar of Wakefield' was poor."—F.

fellows and by his master on account of his infirmity of speech. His countenance was mild; his complexion clear brown, with an expression which might lead you to think he was of Jewish descent. His eyes were not each of the same colour, one was hazel, the other had specks of grey in the iris, mingled as we see red spots in the blood-stone. His step was plantigrade, which made his walk slow and peculiar, adding to the staid appearance of his figure. I never heard his name mentioned without the addition of Charles, although, as there was no other boy of the name of Lamb, the addition was unnecessary; but there was an implied kindness in it, and it was a proof that his gentle manners excited that kindness."

"His delicate frame and his difficulty of utterance, which was increased by agitation, unfitted him for joining in any boisterous sport. The description which he gives, in his 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital,' of the habits and feelings of the schoolboy, is a true one in general, but is more particularly a delineation of himself—the feelings were all in his own heart—the portrait was his own: 'While others were all fire and play, he stole along with all the self-concentration of a young monk.' These habits and feelings were awakened and cherished in him by peculiar circumstances: he had been born and bred in the Inner Temple; and his parents continued to reside there while he was at school, so that he passed from cloister to cloister, and this was all the change his young mind ever knew. On every half-holiday (and there were two in the week) in ten minutes he was in the gardens, on the terrace, or at the fountain of the Temple: here was his home, here his recreation; and the influence they had on his

infant mind is vividly shown in his description of the Old Benchers. He says, 'I was born and passed the first seven years of my life in the Temple:' he might have added, that here he passed a great portion of the second seven years of his life, a portion which mixed itself with all his habits and enjoyments, and gave a bias to the whole. Here he found a happy home, affectionate parents, and a sister who watched over him to the latest hour of his existence (God be with her!) with the tenderest solicitude; and here he had access to the library of Mr. Salt, one of the Benchers, to whose memory his pen has given, in return for this and greater favours—I do not think it extravagant to say—immortality. To use his own language, here he 'was tumbled into a spacious closet of good old English reading, where he browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage.' He applied these words to his sister; but there is no doubt they 'browsed' together; they had walked hand in hand from a time 'extending beyond the period of their memory.'"

When Lamb quitted school, he was in the lower division of the second class—which in the language of the school is termed "being in Greek Form, but not Deputy Grecian."[1] He had read Virgil, Sallust, Terence, selections from Lucian's Dialogues, and Xenophon; and had evinced considerable skill in the niceties of Latin composition, both in prose and verse. His docility and aptitude for the attainment of classical knowledge would have ensured him an exhibition; but to this the impediment in his speech

[1] His various friends, however—Leigh Hunt, Southey, and others—incline to think that he was a Deputy Grecian.—F.

proved an insuperable obstacle. The exhibitions were given under the implied, if not expressed, condition of entering into the Church; the whole course of education was preparatory to that end; and therefore Lamb, who was unfitted by nature for the clerical profession, was not adopted into the class which led to it, and quitted school to pursue the uncongenial labour of the "desk's dull wood." To this apparently hard lot he submitted with cheerfulness, and saw his schoolfellows of his own standing depart, one after another, for the University without a murmur. This acquiescence in his different fortune must have been a hard trial for the sweetness of his disposition; as he always, in after life, regarded the ancient seats of learning with the fondness of one who had been hardly divorced from them. He delighted, when other duties did not hinder, to pass his vacations in their neighbourhood, and indulge in that fancied association with them which he has so beautifully mirrored in his "Sonnet written at Cambridge." What worldly success can, indeed, ever compensate for the want of timely nurture beneath the shade of one of these venerable institutions—for the sense of antiquity shading, not checking, the joyous impulses of opening manhood—for the refinement and the grace there interfused into the long labour of ambitious study—for young friendships consecrated by the associations of long past time; and for liberal emulation, crowned by successes restrained from ungenerous and selfish pride by palpable symbols of the genius and the learning of ages?

On 23rd November, 1789, Lamb finally quitted Christ's Hospital for the abode of his parents, who still resided in the Temple. At first he was employed

in the South Sea House, under his brother John; but on the 5th April, 1792, he obtained an appointment in the Accountant's Office of the East India Company.[1] His salary, though then small, was a welcome addition to the scanty means of his parents; who now were unable, by their own exertions, to increase it, his mother being in ill health, which confined her to her bed, and his father sinking into dotage. On their comfort, however, this, and what was more precious to him, his little leisure, were freely bestowed; and his recreations were confined to a delightful visit to the two-shilling gallery of the theatre, in company with his sister, and an occasional supper with some of his schoolmates,[2] when in town, from Cambridge. On one of these latter occasions he obtained the appellation of *Guy*, by which he was always called among them; but of which few of his late friends heard till after his death. "In the first year of his clerkship," says Mr. Le Grice, in the communication with which he favoured me, "Lamb spent the evening of the 5th November with some of his former schoolfellows, who, being amused with the particularly large and flapping brim of his round hat, pinned it up on the sides in the form of a cocked-hat. Lamb made no alteration in it, but walked home in his usual sauntering gait towards the Temple. As he was going down Ludgate Hill, some gay young men, who seemed not to have passed the London Tavern without resting, exclaimed, 'The veritable Guy!—no man of straw!' and with this exclamation they took him up, making a chair with their arms, carried him, seated him on a

[1] "Through the influence, I believe, of Mr. Salt."—*Procter*.—F.

[2] Leigh Hunt, then at Christ's Hospital, recalls Lamb's occasional visits to the school.—F.

post in St. Paul's Churchyard, and there left him. This story Lamb told so seriously, that the truth of it was never doubted. He wore his three-cornered hat many evenings, and retained the name of Guy ever after. Like Nym, he quietly sympathised in the fun, and seemed to say, 'that was the humour of it.' A clergyman of the City lately wrote to me, 'I have no recollection of Lamb. There was a gentleman called Guy, to whom you once introduced me, and with whom I have occasionally interchanged nods for more than thirty years; but how is it that I never met Mr. Lamb? If I was ever introduced to him, I wonder that we never came in contact during my residence for ten years in Edmonton.' Imagine this gentleman's surprise when I informed him that his nods to Mr. Guy had been constantly reciprocated by Mr. Lamb!"

During these years Lamb's most frequent companion was James White, or rather, Jem White, as he always called him. Lamb always insisted that for hearty joyous humour, tinged with Shakesperean fancy, Jem never had an equal. "Jem White!" said he, to Mr. Le Grice, when they met for the last time, after many years' absence, at the Bell at Edmonton, in June, 1833, "there never was his like! We never shall see such days as those in which Jem flourished!" All that now remains of Jem is the celebration of the suppers which he gave the young chimney-sweepers in the Elia of his friend, and a thin duodecimo volume, which he published in 1796, under the title of the "Letters of Sir John Falstaff, with a dedication (printed in black letter) to Master Samuel Irelaunde," which those who knew Lamb at the time believed to be his. "White's Letters," said Lamb, in a letter to

a friend about this time, "are near publication. His frontispiece is a good conceit; Sir John learning to dance, to please Madam Page, in dress of doublet, etc., from the upper half, and modern pantaloons, with shoes of the eighteenth century, from the lower half, and the whole work is full of goodly quips and rare fancies, 'all deftly masked like hoar antiquity'—much superior to Dr. Kenrick's 'Falstaff's Wedding.'" The work was neglected, although Lamb exerted all the influence he subsequently acquired with more popular writers to obtain for it favourable notices, as will be seen from various passages in his letters. He stuck, however, gallantly by his favourite protégé; and even when he could little afford to disburse sixpence, he made a point of buying a copy of the book whenever he discovered one amidst the refuse of a bookseller's stall, and would present it to a friend in the hope of making a convert. He gave me one of these copies soon after I became acquainted with him, stating that he had purchased it in the morning for sixpence, and assuring me I should enjoy a rare treat in the perusal; but if I must confess the truth, the mask of quaintness was so closely worn, that it nearly concealed the humour. To Lamb it was, doubtless, vivified by the eye and voice of his old boon companion, forming to him an undying commentary; without which it was comparatively spiritless. Alas! how many even of his own most delicate fancies, rich as they are in feeling and in wisdom, will be lost to those who have not present to them the sweet broken accents, and the half playful, half melancholy smile of the writer![1]

[1] "Jem White" held an office in Christ's Hospital, and later, according to Mr. Procter, became a newspaper agent.—F.

But if Jem White was the companion of his lighter moods, the friend of his serious thoughts was a person of far nobler powers—Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was his good fortune to be the schoolfellow of that extraordinary man; and if no particular intimacy had been formed between them at Christ's Hospital, a foundation was there laid for a friendship to which the world is probably indebted for all that Lamb has added to its sources of pleasure. Junior to Coleridge by two years, and far inferior to him in all scholastic acquirements, Lamb had listened to the rich discourse of "the inspired charity-boy" with a wondering delight, pure from all envy, and, it may be, enhanced by his sense of his own feebleness and difficulty of expression. While Coleridge remained at the University, they met occasionally on his visits to London; and when he quitted it, and came to town, full of mantling hopes and glorious schemes, Lamb became his admiring disciple. The scene of these happy meetings was a little public-house, called the Salutation and Cat,[1] in the neighbourhood of Smithfield, where they used to sup, and remain long after they had "heard the chimes at midnight." There they discoursed of Bowles, who was the god of Coleridge's poetical idolatry, and of Burns and Cowper, who, of recent poets, in that season of comparative barrenness, had made the deepest impression on Lamb. There Coleridge talked of "Fate, free-

[1] The tavern still exists, much modernised, as the "Salutation" simply, at No. 17, Newgate Street.· Coleridge's powers of conversation were here exhibited to such profit for the house, that the landlord is said to have offered him free quarters if he would stay and talk on.—F.

will, fore-knowledge absolute," to one who desired "to find no end" of the golden maze; and there he recited his early poems with that deep sweetness of intonation which sunk into the heart of his hearer. To these meetings Lamb was accustomed at all periods of his life to revert, as the season when his finer intellects were quickened into action. Shortly after they had terminated, with Coleridge's departure from London, he thus recalled them in a letter:[1] "When I read in your little volume your nineteenth effusion, or what you call 'the Sigh,' I think I hear *you* again. I imagine to myself the little smoky room at the Salutation and Cat, where we have sat together through the winter nights beguiling the cares of life with Poesy." This was early in 1796! and in 1818, when dedicating his works, then first collected, to his earliest friend, he thus spoke of the same meetings: "Some of the sonnets, which shall be carelessly turned over by the general reader, may happily awaken in you remembrances which I should be sorry should be ever totally extinct,—the memory 'of summer days and of delightful years,' even so far back as those old suppers at our old Inn,—when life was fresh, and topics exhaustless,—and you first kindled in me, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindliness." And so he talked of these unforgotten hours in that short interval during which death divided them!

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[1] This, and other passages I have interwoven with my own slender thread of narration, are from letters which I have thought either too personal for entire publication at present, or not of sufficient interest, in comparison with others, to occupy a portion of the space, to which the letters are limited.

The warmth of Coleridge's friendship supplied the quickening impulse to Lamb's genius; but the germ enfolding all its nice peculiarities lay ready for the influence, and expanded into forms and hues of its own. Lamb's earliest poetry was not a faint reflection of Coleridge's, such as the young lustre of original genius may cast on a polished and sensitive mind, to glow and tremble for a season, but was streaked with delicate yet distinct traits, which proved it an emanation from within. There was, indeed, little resemblance between the two, except in the affection which they bore towards each other. Coleridge's mind, not laden as yet with the spoils of all systems and of all times, glowed with the ardour of uncontrollable purpose, and thirsted for glorious achievement and universal knowledge. The imagination, which afterwards struggled gloriously but perhaps vainly to overmaster the stupendous clouds of German philosophies, breaking them into huge masses, and tinting them with heavenly hues, then shone through the simple articles of Unitarian faith, the graceful architecture of Hartley's theory, and the well-compacted chain by which Priestley and Edwards seemed to bind all things in necessary connection, as through transparencies of thought; and, finding no opposition worthy of its activity in this poor foreground of the mind, opened for itself a bright succession of fairy visions, which it sought to realize on earth. In its light, oppression and force seemed to vanish like the phantoms of a feverish dream; mankind were disposed in the picturesque groups of universal brotherhood; and, in far distance, the ladder which Jacob saw in solemn vision connected earth with heaven, "and the angels of God were

ascending and descending upon it."[1] Lamb had no sympathy with these radiant hopes, except as they were part of his friend. He clung to the realities of life; to things nearest to him, which the force of habit had made dear; and caught tremblingly hold of the past. He delighted, indeed, to hear Coleridge talk of the distant and future; to see the palm-trees wave, and the pyramids tower in the long perspective of his style; and to catch the prophetic notes of a universal harmony trembling in his voice; but the pleasure was only that of admiration unalloyed by envy, and of the generous pride of friendship. The tendency of his mind to detect the beautiful and good in surrounding things, to nestle rather than to roam, was cherished by all the circumstances of his boyish days. He had become familiar with the vestiges of antiquity, both in his school and in his home of the Temple; and these became dear to him in his serious and affectionate childhood. But, perhaps, more even than those external associations, the situation of his parents, as it was elevated and graced by their character, moulded his young thoughts to the holy habit of a liberal obedience, and unaspiring self-respect,

[1] This was the scheme of the "PANTISOCRACY," that strange ideal of communism which seriously engaged the thoughts of Coleridge and a band of ardent and clever youths. The story is naturally and agreeably told by Cottle the bookseller, who welcomed the young enthusiasts at Bristol, allowed himself to be patronised by them with an amiable simplicity, and accepted the publication of their rather immature compositions as a favour and an honour. Southey, Burnett, Lovell, Allen, and Coleridge, were the original spirits of the scheme; but as it became impossible to reach the Susquehanna without money, the enthusiasm soon cooled, and the sectaries fell away one by one.—See Cottle's *Reminiscences, passim.*—F.

which led rather to the embellishment of what was near than to the creation of visionary forms. He saw at home the daily beauty of a cheerful submission to a state bordering on the servile; he looked upward to his father's master, and the old Benchers who walked with him on the stately terrace, with a modest erectness of mind; and he saw in his own humble home how well the decencies of life could be maintained on slender means, by the exercise of generous principle. Another circumstance, akin to these, tended also to impart a tinge of venerableness to his early musings. His maternal grandmother was for many years housekeeper in the old and wealthy family of the Plumers of Hertfordshire, by whom she was held in true esteem; and his visits to their ancient mansion, where he had the free range of every apartment, gallery, and terraced-walk, gave him "a peep at the contrasting accidents of a great fortune," and an alliance with that gentility of soul, which to appreciate, is to share. He has beautifully recorded his own recollections of this place in the essay entitled "Blakesmoor in H——shire," in which he modestly vindicates his claim to partake in the associations of ancestry not his own, and shows the true value of high lineage by detecting the spirit of nobleness which breathes around it, for the enkindling of generous affections, not only in those who may boast of its possession, but in all who can feel its influences.

While the bias of the minds of Coleridge and Lamb thus essentially differed, it is singular that their opinions on religion, and on those philosophical questions which border on religious belief, and receive their colour from it, agreed, although probably derived from various sources. Both were Unitarians, ardent

admirers of the writings and character of Dr. Priestley, and both believers in necessity, according to Dr. Priestley's exposition, and in the inference which he drew from that doctrine respecting moral responsibility, and the ultimate destiny of the human race. The adoption of this creed arose in Lamb from the accident of education; he was brought up to receive and love it; and attended, when circumstances permitted, at the chapel at Hackney, of which Mr. Belsham, afterwards of Essex Street, was then the minister. It is remarkable that another of Lamb's most intimate friends, in whose conversation, next to that of Coleridge, he most delighted, Mr. Hazlitt, with whom he became acquainted at a subsequent time, and who came from a distant part of the country, was educated in the same faith. With Coleridge, whose early impressions were derived from the rites and services of the Church of England, Unitarianism was the result of a strong conviction; so strong, that with all the ardour of a convert, he sought to win proselytes to his chosen creed, and purposed to spend his days in preaching it. Neither of these young men, however, long continued to profess it. Lamb, in his maturer life, rarely alluded to matters of religious doctrine; and when he did so, evinced no sympathy with the professors of his once-loved creed. Hazlitt wrote to his father, who was a Unitarian minister at Wem, with honouring affection; and of his dissenting associates with respect, but he had obviously ceased to think or feel with them; and Coleridge's Remains indicate, what was well known to all who enjoyed the privilege of his conversation, that he not only reverted to a belief in the Trinitarian mysteries, but that he was accustomed to express as

much distaste for Unitarianism, and for the spirit of its more active advocates, as the benignity of his nature would allow him to feel for any human opinion honestly cherished. Perhaps this solitary approach to intolerance in the universality of Coleridge's mind arose from the disapproval with which he might justly regard his own pride of understanding, as excited in defence of the doctrines he had adopted. To him there was much of devotional thought to be violated, many reverential associations, intertwined with the moral being, to be rent away in the struggle of the intellect to grasp the doctrines which were alien to its nurture. But to Lamb these formed the simple creed of his childhood; and slender and barren as they seem, to those who are united in religious sympathy with the great body of their fellow-countrymen, they sufficed for affections which had so strong a tendency to find out resting-places for themselves as his. Those who only knew him in his latter days and who feel that if ever the spirit of Christianity breathed through a human life, it breathed in his, will, nevertheless, trace with surprise the extraordinary vividness of impressions directly religious, and the self-jealousy with which he watched the cares and distractions of the world, which might efface them, in his first letters. If in a life of ungenial toil, diversified with frequent sorrow, the train of these solemn meditations was broken; if he was led, in the distractions and labours of his course, to cleave more closely to surrounding objects than those early aspirations promised; if, in his cravings after immediate sympathy, he rather sought to perpetuate the social circle which he charmed, than to expatiate in scenes of untried being; his pious feelings were only diverted,

not destroyed. The stream glided still, the undercurrent of thought sometimes breaking out in sallies which strangers did not understand, but always feeding and nourishing the most exquisite sweetness of disposition, and the most unobtrusive proofs of self-denying love.

While Lamb was enjoying habits of the closest intimacy with Coleridge in London, he was introduced by him to a young poet whose name has often been associated with his—Charles Lloyd—the son of a wealthy banker at Birmingham, who had recently cast off the trammels of the Society of Friends, and, smitten with the love of poetry, had become a student at the University of Cambridge. There he had been attracted to Coleridge by the fascination of his discourse;[1] and having been admitted to his regard, was introduced by him to Lamb. Lloyd was endeared both to Lamb and Coleridge by a very amiable disposition and a pensive cast of thought; but his intellect bore little resemblance to that of either. He wrote, indeed, pleasing verses with great facility—a facility fatal to excellence; but his mind was chiefly remarkable for the fine power of analysis which distinguishes his "London," and other of his later compositions. In this power of discriminating and distinguishing—carried to a pitch almost of painfulness—Lloyd has scarcely been equalled; and his poems, though rugged in point of versification, will be found by those who will read them with the calm attention they require, replete with critical and moral suggestions of the highest value. He and Coleridge were devoted wholly

[1] This, Southey says, is a mistake. Lloyd first met Coleridge at Bristol, and did not go to Cambridge till some years later.—F.

to literary pursuits; while Lamb's days were given to accounts, and only at snatches of time was he able to cultivate the faculty of which the society of Coleridge had made him imperfectly conscious.

Lamb's first compositions were in verse—produced slowly, at long intervals, and with self-distrust which the encouragements of Coleridge could not subdue. With the exception of a sonnet to Mrs. Siddons, whose acting, especially in the character of Lady Randolph, had made a deep impression upon him, they were exclusively personal. The longest and most elaborate is that beautiful piece of blank verse entitled "The Grandame," in which he so affectionately celebrates the virtues of the "antique world" of the aged housekeeper of Mr. Plumer. A youthful passion, which lasted only a few months, and which he afterwards attempted to regard lightly as a folly past, inspired a few sonnets of very delicate feeling and exquisite music. On the death of his parents, he felt himself called upon by duty to repay to his sister the solicitude with which she had watched over his infancy;—and well indeed he performed it! To her, from the age of twenty-one, he devoted his existence; seeking thenceforth no connection which could interfere with her supremacy in his affections, or impair his ability to sustain and comfort her.

CHAPTER II.

[1795-1798.]

INSANITY OF MARY LAMB.—EARLY POETIC EFFORTS.

IN the year 1795, Charles Lamb resided with his father, mother, and sister, in lodgings at No. 7, Little Queen-street, Holborn. The father was rapidly sinking into dotage; the mother suffered under an infirmity which deprived her of the use of her limbs; and the sister not only undertook the office of daily and nightly attendance on her mother, but sought to add by needle-work to their slender resources.[1] Their income then consisted of an annuity which Mr. Lamb the elder derived from the old Bencher, Mr. Salt, whom he had faithfully served for many years; Charles's salary, which, being that of a clerk of three years' standing in the India House, could have been but scanty; and a small payment made for board by an old maiden aunt, who resided with them. In this year Lamb, being just twenty years of age, began to write verses—partly incited by the example of his old friend, Coleridge, whom he regarded with as much reverence as affection, and partly inspired by an attachment to a young lady residing in the neigh-

[1] Southey thus describes their *ménage* in a letter to Moxon:—"When I saw the family (one evening only, and at that time), they were lodging somewhere near Lincoln's Inn, on the western side (I forget the street), and were evidently in uncomfortable circumstances. The father and mother were both living; and I have some dim recollection of the latter's invalid appearance. The father's senses had failed him before that time."—F.

bourhood of Islington, who is commemorated in his early verses as "the fair-haired maid." How his love prospered we cannot ascertain; but we know how nobly that love, and all hope of the earthly blessings attendant on such an affection, were resigned on the catastrophe which darkened the following year. In the meantime, his youth was lonely—rendered the more so by the recollection of the society of Coleridge, who had just left London—of Coleridge in the first bloom of life and genius, unshaded by the mysticism which it afterwards glorified—full of boundless ambition, love, and hope! There was a tendency to insanity in his family, which had been more than once developed in his sister; and it was no matter of surprise that in the dreariness of his solitude it fell upon him; and that, at the close of the year, he was subjected for a few weeks to the restraint of the insane.[1] The wonder is that, amidst all the difficulties, the sorrows, and the excitements of his succeeding forty years, it never recurred. Perhaps the true cause of this remarkable exemption—an exemption the more remarkable when his afflictions are considered in association with one single frailty—will be found in the sudden claim made on his moral and intellectual nature by a terrible exigency, and by his generous answer to that claim; so that a life of self-sacrifice was rewarded by the preservation of unclouded reason.

In the year 1796, Coleridge, having married,[2] and relinquished his splendid dream of emigration, was resident at Bristol. Lamb felt his absence from Lon-

[1] In his ravings he fancied that he was Young Norval—so Coleridge told Southey.—F.

[2] In the October of 1795.—F.

don bitterly, and sought a correspondence with him as, almost, his only comfort. "In your absence," he writes, in one of the earliest of his letters, "I feel a stupor that makes me indifferent to the hopes and fears of this life. A correspondence opening with you has roused me a little from my lethargy, and made me conscious of existence. Indulge me in it! I will not be very troublesome." And again, a few days after: "You are the only correspondent, and, I might add, the only friend, I have in the world. I go no-where, and have no acquaintance. Slow of speech, and reserved of manners, no one seeks or cares for my society, and I am left alone. Coleridge, I devoutly wish that Fortune, which has made sport with you so long, may play one freak more, throw you into London, or some spot near it, and there snugify you for life." These appeals, it may well be believed, were not made in vain to one who delighted in the lavish communication of the riches of his own mind even to strangers; but none of the letters of Coleridge to Lamb have been preserved. He had just published his "Religious Musings," and the glittering enthusiasm of its language excited Lamb's pious feelings, almost to a degree of pain. "I dare not," says he of this poem, "criticise it. I like not to *select* any part where all is excellent. I can only admire and thank you for it, in the name of a lover of true poetry—

> 'Believe thou, O my soul,
> Life is a vision shadowy of truth;
> And vice, and anguish, and the wormy grave,
> Shapes of a dream.'

I thank you for these lines in the name of a necessarian." To Priestley, Lamb repeatedly alludes as to

the object of their common admiration. "In reading your 'Religious Musings,'" says he, "I felt a transient superiority over you: I *have* seen Priestley. I love to see his name repeated in your writings;—I love and honour him almost profanely."[1]

It was in the spring of this year that Coleridge proposed the association of those first efforts of the young clerk in the India House, which he had prompted and praised, with his own, in a new edition of his Poems, to which Mr. Charles Lloyd also proposed to contribute.[2] Lamb's letters at this time are full of Sonnets transmitted to Coleridge for this purpose, accompanied by characteristic remarks. When later Coleridge became settled in his melancholy cottage, he invited Lamb to visit him, and the hope—the expectation—the disappointment, are all depicted in the various letters the latter sent to his friend. A little copy of verses, in which Lamb commemorated and softened his disappointment, bearing date (a most unusual circumstance with Lamb), 5th July, 1796, was inclosed in a letter of the following day, which refers to a scheme Coleridge had formed of settling in London on an invitation to share the

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[1] Talfourd mentions "a poem" of Coleridge's as being "emulous of Southey's 'Joan of Arc,'" apparently ignorant that it was a contribution from Coleridge to his friend's poem.

[2] Talfourd does not appear to have known that Lamb's verses had already appeared, in company with those of Coleridge, in a little volume published at Bristol in 1796, entitled "Poems on Various Subjects," which is even more scarce than the one spoken of here. Place was given to three of Lamb's Sonnets, introduced with this handsome compliment:—"The effusions signed C. L. were written by Mr. Charles Lamb, of the India House. Independently of the signature, their superior merit would sufficiently have distinguished them."—F.

Editorship of the *Morning Chronicle*. The poem includes a lamentation over a fantastical loss—that of a draught of the Avon "which Shakespeare drank;" somewhat strangely confounding the Avon of Stratford with that of Bristol. It may be doubted whether Shakespeare knew the taste of the waves of one Avon more than of the other, or whether Lamb would not have found more kindred with the world's poet in a glass of sack, than in the water of either stream. Coleridge must have enjoyed the misplaced sentiment of his friend, for he was singularly destitute of sympathy with local associations, which he regarded as interfering with the pure and simple impression of great deeds or thoughts; denied a special interest to the Pass of Thermopylæ: and instead of subscribing to purchase "Shakespeare's House," would scarcely have admitted the peculiar sanctity of the spot which enshrines his ashes.

The autumn found Lamb engaged all the morning in task-work at the India House, and all the evening in attempting to amuse his father by playing cribbage; while Miss Lamb was worn down to a state of extreme nervous misery, by attention to needlework by day, and to her mother by night, until the insanity, which had been manifested more than once, broke out into frenzy, which, on Thursday, 22nd of September, proved fatal to her mother. The following account of the proceedings of the inquest, copied from the *Times* of Monday, 26th September, 1796, supplies the details of this terrible calamity, doubtless with accuracy, except that it would seem, from a letter of Lamb's to Coleridge, that *he*, and not the landlord, took the knife from the unconscious hand.

"On Friday afternoon, the coroner and a jury sat

on the body of a lady in the neighbourhood of Holborn, who died in consequence of a wound from her daughter the preceding day. It appeared, by the evidence adduced, that, while the family were preparing for dinner, the young lady seized a case-knife lying on the table, and in a menacing manner pursued a little girl, her apprentice, round the room. On the calls of her infirm mother to forbear, she renounced her first object, and, with loud shrieks, approached her parent. The child, by her cries, quickly brought up the landlord of the house, but too late. The dreadful scene presented to him the mother lifeless, pierced to the heart, on a chair, her daughter yet wildly standing over her with the fatal knife, and the old man, her father, weeping by her side, himself bleeding at the forehead from the effects of a severe blow he received from one of the forks she had been madly hurling about the room.

"For a few days prior to this, the family had observed some symptoms of insanity in her, which had so much increased on the Wednesday evening, that her brother, early the next morning, went to Dr. Pitcairn, but that gentleman was not at home.

"It seems the young lady had been once before deranged.

"The jury, of course, brought in their verdict—*Lunacy*."[1]

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[1] A statement nearly similar to this will be found in several other journals of the day, and in the Annual Register for the year. The *True Briton* adds:—"It appears she had been before, in the earlier part of her life, deranged, from the harassing fatigues of too much business. As her carriage towards her mother had always been affectionate in the extreme, it is believed her increased attachment to her, as her infirmities called for it by day and by night, caused her loss of

The following is Lamb's account of the event to Coleridge :—

"September 27th, 1796.

"My dearest Friend,—White, or some of my friends, or the public papers, by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines :—My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses,—I eat, and drink, and sleep, and have my judgment, I believe, very sound. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with. With me 'the former things are passed away,' and I have something more to do than to feel.

"God Almighty have us well in his keeping.

"C. LAMB."

"Mention nothing of poetry. I have destroyed every vestige of past vanities of that kind. Do as you please, but if you publish, publish mine (I give free leave) without name or initial, and never send me a book, I charge you. "C. LAMB."[1]

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reason at this time. It has been stated in some of the morning papers that she has an insane brother in confinement; but this is without foundation." None of the accounts give the names of the sufferers; but in the index to the Annual Register, the anonymous account is referred to with Mrs. Lamb's name.

[1] In "The Old Familiar Faces" was originally inserted a stanza, which he suppressed later, as touching on terrible recollections.

"Where are they gone, the old familiar faces
I had a mother, but she died,
Died prematurely in a day of horrors."—F.

The anxieties of Lamb's new position were assuaged during the spring of 1797, by frequent communications with Coleridge respecting the anticipated volume, and by some additions to his own share in its pages. He was also cheered by the company of Lloyd, who, having resided for a few months with Coleridge, at Stowey, came to London in some perplexity as to his future course. Of this visit Lamb speaks in a letter, probably written in January. It contains some verses expressive of his delight at Lloyd's visit, which, although afterwards inserted in the volume, are well fitted to their frame-work of prose, and indicative of the feelings of the writer at this crisis of his life.

Poor Charles Lloyd! Delusions of the most melancholy kind thickened over his latter days—yet left his admirable intellect free for the finest processes of severe reasoning.[1] At a time when, like Cowper, he believed himself the especial subject of Divine wrath, he could bear his part in the most subtle disquisition on questions of religion, morals, and poetry, with the nicest accuracy of perception and the most exemplary candour; and, after an argument of hours, revert, with a faint smile, to his own despair!

As summer advanced, Lamb discerned a hope of compensation for the disappointment of last year, by

[1] He had been already thus afflicted, when staying with Coleridge at Stowey. "I write under great agony of mind, Charles Lloyd being very ill. He has been seized with his fits three times in the space of seven days: and just as I was in bed last night, I was called up again; and from twelve o'clock at night to five this morning, he remained in one continued state of agonized delirium."—*Coleridge to Cottle.*—F.

a visit to Coleridge; and thus expressed his wishes:—"I discern a possibility of my paying you a visit next week. May I, can I, shall I, come as soon? Have you *room* for me, *leisure* for me, and are you all pretty well? Tell me all this honestly—immediately." The visit was enjoyed; and Lamb was once more left to the daily labours of the India House and the unceasing anxieties of his home.[1]

Soon after, death released his father from his state of imbecility and the son from his wearisome duties. With his life, the annuity he had derived from the old Bencher he had served so faithfully, ceased; while the aunt continued to linger still with Lamb in his cheerless lodging. His sister still remained in confinement in the asylum to which she had been consigned on her mother's death—perfectly sensible and calm,—and he was passionately desirous of obtaining her liberty. The surviving members of the family, especially his brother John,[2] who enjoyed a fair income in the South Sea House, opposed her discharge;—and painful doubts were suggested by the authorities of the parish, where the terrible occurrence happened, whether they were not bound to institute proceedings, which must have placed her for life at the disposition of the Crown, especially as no medical assurance could be given against the probable recur-

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[1] It took place in the first week in July, 1797, when the good-natured bookseller, Cottle, was invited to meet him, who, arriving later, heard Coleridge descant warmly and affectionately on the merits of his old schoolfellow.—F.

[2] "I do not retain an agreeable impression of him. If not rude, he was sometimes, indeed, generally, abrupt and unprepossessing in manner. He was assuredly deficient in that courtesy which usually springs from a mind at friendship with the world."—*Procter*.—F.

rence of dangerous frenzy. But Charles came to her deliverance; he satisfied all the parties who had power to oppose her release, by his solemn engagement that he would take her under his care for life; and he kept his word. Whether any communication with the Home Secretary occurred before her release, I have been unable to ascertain; it was the impression of Mr. Lloyd, from whom my own knowledge of the circumstances, which the letters do not ascertain, was derived, that a communication took place, on which a similar pledge was given; at all events, the result was, that she left the asylum and took up her abode for life with her brother Charles For her sake, at the same time, he abandoned all thoughts of love and marriage; and with an income of scarcely more than £100 a-year, derived from his clerkship, aided for a little while by the old aunt's small annuity, set out on the journey of life at twenty-two years of age, cheerfully, with his beloved companion, endeared to him the more by her strange calamity, and the constant apprehension of a recurrence of the malady which had caused it! The illness of the poor old aunt brought on the confirmation of Lamb's fears respecting his sister's malady. After lingering a short time she died; but before this Miss Lamb's incessant attendance upon her produced a recurrence of insanity, and Lamb was obliged to place her under medical care, and was left alone to write letters full of misery to his friend.

It would seem that Lamb, at first, took a small lodging for his sister apart from his own—but soon to be for life united. His feelings on the recurrence of the season, which had, last year, been darkened by his terrible calamity, can be understood from the first

of two pieces of blank verse, which fill the two first sheets of a letter to Coleridge, written under an apprehension of some neglect on the part of his friend, which had its cause in no estrangement of Coleridge's affections, but in the vicissitudes of the imaginative philosopher's fortune, and the constancy of his day-dreamings. These were the verses entitled, "Written a Twelvemonth after the Events," and beginning :—

"Alas! how am I changed!"

and in which occurred these lines :—

"Thou and I, dear friend,
With filial recognition sweet, shall know
One day the face of our dear mother in heaven,
And her remember'd looks of love shall greet
With answering looks of love, her placid smiles
Meet with a smile as placid, and her hand
With drops of fondness wet, nor fear repulse."

In the margin of MS. he wrote, "This is almost literal from a letter of my sister's—less than a year ago."

And again :—

"O my companions! O ye loved names
Of friend, or playmate dear, gone are ye now.
Gone divers ways; to honour and credit some;
And some, I fear, to ignominy and shame!"

In the margin he added, "Alluding to some of my old play-fellows being, literally, 'on the town,' and some otherwise wretched.

Two months, though passed by Lamb in anxiety and labour, but cheered by Miss Lamb's continued possession of reason, so far restored the tone of his mind, that his interest in the volume which had been contemplated to introduce his first verses to the world,

in association with those of his friend, was enkindled anew. While cherishing the hope of reunion with his sister, and painfully wresting his leisure hours from poetry and Coleridge to amuse the dotage of his father, he watched over his own returning sense of enjoyment with a sort of holy jealousy, apprehensive lest he should forget too soon the terrible visitation of Heaven. It would seem that his acquaintance with the old English dramatists had just commenced with Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger.

A proposal by Coleridge to print Lamb's poems with a new edition of his own (an association in which Lloyd was ultimately included) occasioned reciprocal communications of each other's verses, and many questions of small alterations suggested and argued on both sides.

The volume which was to combine the early poetry of the three friends was not completed in the year 1796, and proceeded slowly through the press in the following year; Lamb occasionally submitting an additional sonnet, or correction of one already sent, to the judgment of Coleridge, and filling long letters with minute suggestions on Coleridge's share of the work, and high, but honest expressions of praise of particular images and thoughts. The eulogy is only interesting as indicative of the reverential feeling with which Lamb regarded the genius of Coleridge—but one or two specimens of the gentle rebuke which he ventured on, when the gorgeousness of Coleridge's language seemed to oppress his sense, are worthy of preservation. The following relates to a line in the noble Ode on the Departing Year, in which Coleridge had written of

> "Th' ethereal multitude,
> Whose purple locks with snow-white glories shone."

"'Purple locks, and snow-white glories;'—these are things the muse talks about when, to borrow H. Walpole's witty phrase, she is not finely-frenzied, only a little light-headed, that's all—'Purple-locks.' They may manage things differently in fairyland; but your 'golden tresses' are to my fancy."

On this remonstrance Coleridge changed the "purple" into "golden," defending his original epithet, and Lamb gave up the point.

In the commencement of the previous year, Coleridge removed from Bristol to a cottage at Nether Stowey, to embody his favourite dream of a cottage life. This change of place probably delayed the printing of the volume; and Coleridge, busy with a thousand speculations, became irregular in replying to the letters with writing which Lamb solaced his weary hours.

Not satisfied with the dedication of his portion of the volume to his sister, and the sonnet which had been sent to the press, Lamb urged on Coleridge the insertion of another, which seems to have been ultimately withheld as too poor in poetical merit for publication. The rejected sonnet ("Friend of my earliest years") and the references made to it by the writer, have an interest now beyond what mere fancy can give.

At length the small volume containing the poems of Coleridge, Lloyd, and Lamb, was published by Mr. Cottle at Bristol. It excited little attention; but Lamb had the pleasure of seeing his dedication to his sister printed in good set form, after his own fashion, and of witnessing the delight and pride with which she received it. This little book, now very scarce, had the following motto, expressive of Coleridge's feelings towards his associates:—*Duplex nobis vin-*

culum, et amicitiæ et similium junctarumque Camænarum ; quod utinam neque mors solvat, neque temporis longinquitas.[1] Lamb's share of the work consists of

[1] "The Latin motto, prefixed to the second edition of Mr. C.'s poems, puzzled everybody to know from what author it was derived. One and another inquired of me, to no purpose, and expressed a wish that Mr. C. had been clearer in his citation, 'as no one could understand it.' On my naming this to Mr. Coleridge, he laughed heartily, and said, 'It was all a hoax. Not meeting,' said he, 'with a suitable motto, I invented one, and with references perfectly obscure."—Cottle's *Reminiscences*, 168. The reference was an excellent mystification.—"*Groscoll.* Epist. ad Car., *Utenhov. et Ptol. Lux. Last.*"

In this arrangement there were some evidences of the almost tender affection with which Lamb had inspired Coleridge. He would admit Lloyd's poems, "on condition that you print them in this volume of his, Charles Lamb's, poems; the title-page, Poems by S. T. Coleridge. Second Edition; to which are added Poems by C. Lamb and C. Lloyd. C. Lamb's Poems will occupy about forty pages; C. Lloyd's at least one hundred, although only his choice fish." At Lamb's request, however, Lloyd's pieces were placed first. In the new volume Coleridge said, "There were inserted in my former edition a few sonnets of my friend and old schoolfellow, Charles Lamb. He has now communicated to me a complete Collection of all his Poems. *Quæ qui non rorsus amet, illum omnes et Virtutes et Veneres odere.*" He then mentions Lloyd, but not so affectionately. "My friend Charles Lloyd has likewise joined me, and has contributed every poem of his which he deemed worthy of preservation." This republication of the poems seems to have been connected with a dissolution of the partnership, the result of a quarrel between Coleridge and Lloyd, and also of a coolness between Lamb and Coleridge. On receipt of the volume, Lamb had written warmly, praising Lloyd's contributions, which he thought "eminently beautiful," but deferring his consideration of Coleridge's. He was not satisfied, too, with some alterations made in his own lines; "though I think whoever altered . . . . . did wrong." On the other hand, the two minor poets could not have relished some verses in ridicule of their style, which Coleridge sent to a magazine, under the signature of "Nehemiah Higginbotham," and which, as he owned, were intended to expose "that affectation of unaffectedness, of jumping and misplaced accent, in common-place epithets, flat lines forced into

eight sonnets; four short fragments of blank verse, of which the Grandame is the principal; a poem, called the Tomb of Douglas; some verses to Charles

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poetry by italics (signifying how well and mouthishly the author would read them), puny pathos, etc., etc.; the instances were almost all taken from myself, and Lloyd and Lamb." Though he affected to include his own productions, the ridicule really affects his weaker companions. His severity in the case of Lamb, will be seen by comparing the sonnets:—

> "Was it some sweet delight of Faery,
> That mock'd my steps with many a lonely glade,
> And fancied wand'rings with a fair-haired maid.
> Have these things been? Or what rare witchery
> (Impregning with delights the charmed air)
> Enlightened up the semblance of a smile
> In those fine eyes? Methought they spake the while
> Soft soothing things, which might enforce Despair
> To drop the murdering knife, and let go by
> His foul resolve. And does the lonely glade,
> Still court the footsteps of the fair-haired maid?
> Still in her locks the gales of summer sigh?
> While I forlorn do wander, heedless where,
> And 'mid my wanderings meet no Anna there."

So in the "HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT":

> "Did ye not see her gleaming through the glade?
> Belike 'twas she, the maiden all forlorn.
> What though she milk no cow with crumpled horn,
> Yet ay she haunts the dale where erst she stray'd,
> And ay beside her stalks her amorous knight!
> Still on his thighs his wonted brogues are worn,
> And through these brogues, still tattered and betorn,
> His hindward charms gleam an unearthly white;
> As when through broken clouds, at night's high noon,
> Peeps in fair fragment forth—the full-orb'd harvest moon."

However this may have been, it was not likely to have caused any serious dissension between Lamb and his old friend; and the visit to Stowey with Mary Lamb, as stated in the text, seems to have fol-

Lloyd; and a vision of Repentance; which are all published in the last edition of his poetical works, except one of the sonnets, which was addressed to

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lowed, in the first months of the year 1798. It is probable that the sensitive Lloyd showed some jealousy as to the success of the volume, which Coleridge naturally considered was owing to his share in the work. When a new edition was talked of, he may have shown a wish to be free from the alliance; or what is more likely, thought that *his* labours were obscured by "the greater Ajax." Cottle seems to say that both causes were at work. Lloyd proposed to his friend Lamb that they should withdraw theirs from the association, and publish their poems without Coleridge. On this being opened to the latter by the publisher, he wrote scornfully, "It is curious that I should be applied to to be persuaded to resign; and in hopes that I might 'consent to give up' (unknown by whom) a number of poems which were published at the request of the author. . . . Times change and people change; so let us keep our souls in quietness! I have no objection to any disposal of Lloyd's poems, except that of their being republished with mine. The motto which I had prefixed, 'Duplex, etc.,' from Groscollius, has placed me in a ridiculous situation, but it was a foolish and presumptuous start of affectionateness, and I am not unwilling to incur the punishment due to my folly." "Mr. C.," adds Cottle, "even determined that the productions of his two late friends should be excluded. Strange as it may appear, Charles Lamb determined to desert the inglorious ground of neutrality, and to commence active operations against his late friend." At the end of May, 1798, Lamb went down on a visit to Lloyd at Birmingham, and remained a fortnight with him. Never had Lamb "been so happy in his life." His enthusiastic friend, by dwelling on his little grievances against Coleridge, made him a partisan, having indiscreetly shown him a letter, in which was illustrated a distinction between the proportions of great genius and simple talent, contrasted with great talent and little genius, by the instances of Lamb's nature and his own. It was, no doubt, Lloyd that repeated the speech, "Poor Lamb! If he wants any knowledge he may apply to me." This provoked Lamb to address to him the table of Theses, which he proposed that Coleridge should defend or oppugn in the German schools. And what shows that he was hurt by the ridicule of his verses, is his rather bitter retort, "Wishing, learned sir, that you may see Schiller, and *swing in a*

Mrs. Siddons, and the Tomb of Douglas, which was justly omitted as common-place and vapid. They only occupy twenty-eight duodecimo pages, within which space was comprised all that Lamb at this time had written which he deemed worth preserving.

Lamb, however, was not now so lonely as when he wrote to Coleridge imploring his correspondence as the only comfort of his sorrows and labours; for, through the instrumentality of Coleridge, he was now rich in friends. Among his friends then was Wordsworth, the great regenerator of English poetry, preparing for his long contest with the glittering forms of inane phraseology which had usurped the dominion of the public mind, and with the cold mockeries of scorn with which their supremacy was defended. By those the beauty of his character was felt; the original cast of his powers was appreciated; and his

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wood (Vide Poems)," which refers to a sonnet addressed to the German poet, in which occurs the words, "tempest-swinging wood." On receipt of this challenge, Coleridge affected to treat the matter lightly, saying, as he handed the letter to Cottle, "these young visionaries will do each other no good." The publisher saw, however, that he was "greatly hurt," and wrote off "a conciliatory letter" to Lloyd, from whom he received a careless reply:—"I cannot think I have acted with, or from, passion towards him. Even my solitary thoughts have been easy and calm, when they have dwelt on him. . . . At present I could not well go to Stowey. But," he added, "he loved Coleridge." It has been denied that even so much as a vapour ever clouded the intercourse of Lamb and Coleridge, but if further proof were wanting, we have only to turn to "The Old Familiar Faces," published in January, 1798, and where the lines—

> "I have a friend, a kinder friend had no man;
> Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly."

refer to Coleridge.—F.

peculiar humour was detected and kindled into fitful life.

At this time, the only literary man whom Lamb knew in London was George Dyer, who had been noted as an accomplished scholar, in Lamb's early childhood, at Christ's Hospital. For him Lamb cherished all the esteem that his guileless simplicity of character and gentleness of nature could inspire; in these qualities the friends were akin; but no two men could be more opposite than they were to each other, in intellectual qualifications and tastes—Lamb, in all things original, and rejoicing in the quaint, the strange, the extravagant; Dyer, the quintessence of learned commonplace; Lamb wildly catching the most evanescent spirit of wit and poetry; Dyer, the wondering disciple of their established forms. Dyer officiated as a revering High Priest at the Altar of the Muses—such as they were in the staid, antiquated trim of the closing years of the eighteenth century, before they formed sentimental attachments in Germany, or flirted with revolutionary France, or renewed their youth by drinking the Spirit of the Lakes. Lamb esteemed and loved him so well, that he felt himself entitled to make sport with his peculiarities; but it was as Fielding might sport with his own idea of Parson Adams, or Goldsmith with his Dr. Primrose.

CHAPTER III.

[1798—1806.]

Rosamund Gray.—John Woodvil.

In the year 1798, the blank verse of Lloyd and Lamb, which had been contained in the volume published in conjunction with Coleridge, was, with some additions by Lloyd, published in a thin duodecimo, price 2*s.* 6*d.*, under the title of "Blank Verse, by Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb." This unpretending book was honoured by a brief and scornful notice in the catalogue of *The Monthly Review*, in the small print of which the works of the poets who are now recognised as the greatest ornaments of their age, and who have impressed it most deeply by their genius, were usually named to be dismissed with a sneer. After a contemptuous notice of "The Mournful Muse" of Lloyd, Lamb receives his *quietus* in a line:—"Mr. Lamb, the joint author of this little volume, seems to be very properly associated with his plaintive companion."[1]

In this year Lamb composed his prose tale, "Rosamond Gray," and published it in a volume of the same size and price with the last, under the title of "A Tale of Rosamund Gray and Old Blind Margaret," which, having a semblance of story, sold much better than his poems, and added a few pounds to his

[1] *Monthly Review*, Sept., 1798.

slender income. This miniature romance is unique in English literature. It bears the impress of a recent perusal of "The Man of Feeling," and "Julia de Roubigné;" and while on the one hand it wants the graphic force and delicate touches of Mackenzie, it is informed with deeper feeling and breathes a diviner morality than the most charming of his tales. Lamb never possessed the faculty of constructing a plot either for drama or novel; and while he luxuriated in the humour of Smollett, the wit of Fielding, or the solemn pathos of Richardson, he was not amused, but perplexed, by the attempt to thread the windings of story which conduct to their most exquisite passages through the maze of adventure. In this tale, nothing is made out with distinctness, except the rustic piety and grace of the lovely girl and her venerable grandmother, which are pictured with such earnestness and simplicity as might beseem a fragment of the book of Ruth. The villain who lays waste their humble joys is a murky phantom without individuality; the events are obscured by the haze of sentiment which hovers over them; and the narrative gives way to the reflections of the author, who is mingled with the persons of the tale in visionary confusion, and gives to it the character of a sweet but disturbed dream. It has an interest now beyond that of fiction; for in it we may trace, "as in a glass darkly," the characteristics of the mind and heart of the author, at a time when a change was coming upon them. There are the dainty sense of beauty just weaned from its palpable object, and quivering over its lost images; feeling grown retrospective before its time, and tinging all things with a strange solemnity; hints of that craving after immediate

appliances which might give impulse to a harassed frame, and confidence to struggling fancy, and of that escape from the pressure of agony into fantastic mirth, which in after life made Lamb a problem to a stranger, while they endeared him a thousand-fold to those who really knew him. While the fulness of the religious sentiments, and the scriptural cast of the language, still partake of his early manhood, the visit of the narrator of the tale to the churchyard where his parents lie buried, after his nerves had been strung for the endeavour by wine at the village inn, and the half-frantic jollity of his old heart-broken friend (the lover of the tale), whom he met there, with the exquisite benignity of thought breathing through the whole, prophesy the delightful peculiarities and genial frailties of an after day. The reflections he makes on the eulogistic character of all the inscriptions, are drawn from his own childhood; for when a very little boy, walking with his sister in a churchyard, he suddenly asked her, "*Mary, where do the naughty people lie?*"

"Rosamund Gray" remained unreviewed till August, 1800, when it received the following notice in *The Monthly Review's* catalogue, the manufacturer of which was probably more tolerant of heterodox composition in prose than verse:—"In the perusal of this pathetic and interesting story, the reader who has a mind capable of enjoying rational and moral sentiment will feel much gratification. Mr. Lamb has here proved himself skilful in touching the nicest feelings of the heart, and in affording great pleasure to the imagination, by exhibiting events and situations which, in the hands of a writer less conversant with the springs and energies of the *moral sense*,

would make a very '*sorry figure.*'" While we acknowledge this scanty praise as a redeeming trait in the long series of critical absurdities, we cannot help observing how curiously misplaced all the laudatory epithets are; the sentiment being profound and true, but not "*rational*," and the "springs and energies of the moral sense" being substituted for a weakness which had a power of its own!

Lamb was introduced by Coleridge to Southey as early as the year 1795; but no intimacy ensued until he accompanied Lloyd in the summer of 1797 to the little village of Burton, near Christchurch, in Hampshire, where Southey was then residing, and where they spent a fortnight as the poet's guests.[1] After Coleridge's departure for Germany, in 1798, a correspondence began between Lamb and Southey, which continued through that and part of the following year;—Southey communicates to Lamb his Eclogues, which he was then preparing for the press, and Lamb repaying the confidence by submitting the products of his own leisure hours to his genial critic. If Southey did not, in all respects, compensate Lamb for the absence of his earlier friend, he excited in him a more entire and active intellectual sympathy; as the character of Southey's mind bore more resemblance to his own than that of Coleridge. In purity of thought; in the love of the minutest vestige of antiquity; in a certain primness of style bounding in the rich humour which threatened to overflow it; they were nearly akin: both alike reverenced childhood,

[1] "Where I was lodging in a very humble cottage," says Southey.—*Letter to Moxon.* He adds that Lloyd was inclined to form "sudden friendships."—F.

and both had preserved its best attributes unspotted from the world. If Lamb bowed to the genius of Coleridge with a fonder reverence, he felt more at home with Southey; and although he did not pour out the inmost secrets of his soul in his letters to him as to Coleridge, he gave more scope to the "first sprightly runnings" of his humorous fancy.

At this time Lamb's most intimate associates were Lloyd and Jem White, the author of the Falstaff Letters. When Lloyd was in town, he and White lodged in the same house, and were fast friends, though no two men could be more unlike, Lloyd having no drollery in his nature, and White nothing else. "You will easily understand," observes Mr. Southey, in a letter with which he favoured the publisher, "how Lamb could sympathise with both."[1]

The literary association of Lamb with Coleridge and Southey drew down upon him the hostility of the young scorners of the "Anti-Jacobin," who luxuriating in boyish pride and aristocratic patronage, tossed the arrows of their wit against all charged with innovation, whether in politics or poetry, and cared little whom they wounded. No one could be more innocent than Lamb of political heresy; no one more strongly opposed to new theories in morality, which he always regarded with disgust; and yet he not only shared in the injustice which accused his friends of the last, but was confounded in the charge of the first,—his only crime being that he had published a few poems deeply coloured with religious enthusiasm, in conjunction with two other men of genius, who were dazzled by the glowing phantoms which the French

[1] Lloyd died at Versailles in 1839.—F.

Revolution had raised. The very first number of the *Anti-Jacobin Magazine and Review* was adorned by a caricature of Gilray's, in which Coleridge and Southey were introduced with asses' heads, and Lloyd and Lamb as toad and frog. In the number for July appeared the well-known poem of the "New Morality," in which all the prominent objects of the hatred of these champions of religion and order were introduced as offering homage to Lepaux, a French charlatan,—of whose existence Lamb had never even heard.

"Couriers and Stars, sedition's evening host,
Thou *Morning Chronicle*, and *Morning Post*,
Whether ye make the 'Rights of Man' your theme,
Your country libel, and your God blaspheme,
Or dirt on private worth and virtue throw,
Still *blasphemous or blackguard*, praise Lepaux.

And ye five other wandering bards, that move
In sweet accord of harmony and love,
C——dge and S—th—y, L—d, and L—b and Co.,
Tune all your mystic harps to praise Lepaux!"

Not content with thus confounding persons of the most opposite opinions and the most various characters in one common libel, the party returned to the charge in the number for September, and thus denounced the young poets, in a parody on the "Ode to the Passions," under the title of "The Anarchists."

"Next H—le—ft vow'd in doleful tone,
No more to fire a thankless age:
Oblivion mark'd his labours for her own,
Neglected from the press, and damn'd upon the stage.

See! faithful to their mighty dam,
C——dge, S—th—y, L—d, and L—b,
In splay-foot madrigals of love,
Soft moaning like the widow'd dove,

Pour, side-by-side, their sympathetic notes;
Of equal rights, and civic feasts,
And tyrant kings, and knavish priests,
Swift through the land the tuneful mischief floats.

And now to softer strains they struck the lyre,
They sung the beetle or the mole,
The dying kid, or ass's foal,
By cruel man permitted to expire."

These effusions have the palliation which the excess of sportive wit, impelled by youthful spirits and fostered by the applause of the great, brings with it; but it will be difficult to palliate the coarse malignity of a passage in the prose department of the same work, in which the writer added to a statement that Mr. Coleridge was dishonoured at Cambridge for preaching Deism: "Since then he has left his native country, commenced citizen of the world, left his poor children fatherless, and his wife destitute. *Ex his disce*, his friends Lamb and Southey." It was surely rather too much even for partisans, when denouncing their political opponents as men who "dirt on private worth and virtue threw," thus to slander two young men of the most exemplary character—one, of an almost puritanical exactness of demeanour and conduct—and the other, persevering in a life of noble self-sacrifice, chequered only by the frailties of a sweet nature, which endeared him even to those who were not admitted to the intimacy necessary to appreciate the touching example of his severer virtues!

If Lamb's acquaintance with Coleridge and Southey procured for him the scorn of the more virulent of the Anti-Jacobin party, he showed by his intimacy with another distinguished object of their animosity, that he was not solicitous to avert it. He was intro-

duced by Mr. Coleridge to one of the most remarkable persons of that stirring time—the author of "Caleb Williams," and of the "Political Justice." The first meeting between Lamb and Godwin did not wear a promising aspect. Lamb grew warm as the conviviality of the evening advanced, and indulged in some freaks of humour which had not been dreamed of in Godwin's philosophy; and the philosopher, forgetting the equanimity with which he usually looked on the vicissitudes of the world or the whist-table, broke into an allusion to Gilray's caricature, and asked, "Pray, Mr. Lamb, are you *toad* or *frog*?"[1] Coleridge was apprehensive of a rupture; but calling the next morning on Lamb, he found Godwin seated at breakfast with him; and an interchange of civilities and card-parties was established, which lasted through the life of Lamb, whom Godwin only survived a few months. Indifferent altogether to the politics of the age, Lamb could not help being struck with productions of its new-born energies, so remarkable as the works and the character of Godwin. He seemed to realize in himself what Wordsworth long afterwards described, "the central calm at the heart of all agitation." Through the medium of his mind the stormy convulsions of society were seen "silent as in a picture." Paradoxes the most daring wore the air of deliberate wisdom as he pronounced them. He foretold the future happiness of mankind, not with the inspiration of the poet, but with the grave and

[1] "Mrs. Coleridge will remember," writes Southey, "the scene, which was to her sufficiently uncomfortable." In his first edition Talfourd, mistaking the point of the jest, had written, "are you both *toad and frog?*"—F.

passionless voice of the oracle. There was nothing better calculated at once to feed and to make steady the enthusiasm of youthful patriots than the high speculations, in which he taught them to engage on the nature of social evils and the great destiny of his species. No one would have suspected the author of those wild theories, which startled the wise and shocked the prudent, in the calm, gentlemanly person who rarely said anything above the most gentle common-place, and took interest in little beyond the whist-table. His peculiar opinions were entirely subservient to his love of letters. He thought any man who had written a book had attained a superiority over his fellows which placed him in another class, and could scarcely understand other distinctions. Of all his works Lamb liked his "Essay on Sepulchres" the best—a short development of a scheme for preserving in one place the memory of all great writers deceased, and assigning to each his proper station,—quite chimerical in itself, but accompanied with solemn and touching musings on life and death and fame, embodied in a style of singular refinement and beauty.

At this time Lamb began to write the tragedy of "John Woodvil." His admiration of the dramatists of Elizabeth's age was yet young, and had some of the indiscretion of an early love; but there was nothing affected in the antique cast of his language, or the frequent roughness of his verse. His delicate sense of beauty had found a congenial organ in the style which he tasted with rapture; and criticism gave him little encouragement to adapt it to the frigid insipidities of the time. "My tragedy," says he in the first letter to Southey, which alludes to the play, "will be

a medley (or I intend it to be a medley) of laughter and tears, prose and verse; and, in some places, rhyme; songs, wit, pathos, humour; and, if possible, sublimity;—at least, 'tis not a fault in my intention if it does not comprehend most of these discordant atoms—Heaven send they dance not the dance of death!" In another letter he there introduces the delicious rhymed passage in the "Forest Scene," which Godwin, having accidentally seen quoted, took for a choice fragment of an old dramatist, and went to Lamb to assist him in finding the author. It seems to have been finished about Christmas, and transmitted to Mr. Kemble. Like all young authors, who are fascinated by the splendour of theatrical representation, he longed to see his conceptions embodied on the stage, and to receive his immediate reward in the sympathy of a crowd of excited spectators. The hope was vain;—but it cheered him in many a lonely hour, and inspired him to write when exhausted with the business of the day, and when the less powerful stimulus of the press would have been insufficient to rouse him.

In the summer he revisited the scenes in Hertfordshire, where, in his grandmother's time, he had spent so many happy holidays. His choice list of friends in the meantime received a most important addition in Mr. Thomas Manning, then a mathematical tutor at Cambridge; of whom he became a frequent correspondent, and to whom he remained strongly attached through life. Lloyd had become a graduate of the University, and to his introduction Lamb was indebted for Manning's friendship. His letters show how earnestly, yet how modestly, Lamb sought it.

Early in the following year (1800), Lamb, with his

sister, removed to Chapel Street, Pentonville. In the summer he visited Coleridge, at Stowey, and spent a few delightful holidays in his society and that of Wordsworth, who then resided in the neighbourhood. This was the first opportunity Lamb had enjoyed of seeing much of the poet, who was destined to exercise a beneficial and lasting influence on the literature and moral sense of the opening century. At this time Lamb was scarcely prepared to sympathise with the naked simplicity of the "Lyrical Ballads," which Wordsworth was preparing for the press. The "rich conceits" of the writers of Elizabeth's reign, had been blended with his first love of poetry, and he could not at once acknowledge the serene beauty of a style, in which language was only the stainless mirror of thought, and which sought no aid either from the grandeur of artificial life or the pomp of words. In after days he was among the most earnest of this great poet's admirers, and rejoiced as he found the scoffers who sneered at his bold experiment gradually owning his power.

Coleridge shortly after came to town, to make arrangements for his contributions to the daily press, and afterwards spent some weeks with Lamb. It was during this visit that he recommended Lamb to Mr. Daniel Stuart, then editor of the *Morning Post*, as a writer of light articles, by which he might add something to an income, then barely sufficient for the decent support of himself and his sister. It would seem from his letter to Manning, that he had made an offer to try his hand at some personal squibs, which, ultimately, was not accepted. Manning need not have feared that there would have been a particle of malice in them! Lamb afterwards became a cor-

respondent[1] to the paper, and has recorded his experience of the misery of toiling after pleasantries in one of the "Essays of Elia," entitled "Newspapers thirty-five years ago."[2]

[1] Lamb may have filled this office in the more extended sense of the word. The *Morning Post* at this time sent an agent to Margate, to report the fashionable arrivals, etc. Now from an allusion in one of Lamb's letters, he would seem to have been at Margate about this period (1802-3). I have discovered some of these "pleasantries," which will be found, *post*, in the notes to the Elia Essays.—F.

[2] He was not to keep this connection very long. "Charles has lost the newspaper, but what we dreaded as an evil has proved the greatest blessing, for we have both strangely recovered our health and spirits since this has happened."—*Letter of Mary Lamb*, 1804. Connected with this loss, which was more serious than might have been supposed, was a little incident which gives a charming idea of Mary Lamb, her deep affection and earnestness, as well as of her pleasant discrimination of character. "My brother," she writes, "has had a letter from your Mother, which has distressed him sadly—about the postage of some letters being paid by my brother—your silly brother, it seems, has informed your Mother (I did not think your brother could have been so silly) that Charles had grumbled at paying the said postage. The fact was, just at that time we were very poor, having lost the Morning Post, & we were beginning to practise a strict economy. My brother, who never makes up his mind whether he will be a Miser or a Spendthrift, is at all times a strange mixture of both: of this failing, the even economy of your correct brother's temper makes him an ill judge. The miserly part of Charles, at that time smarting under his recent loss, then happened to reign triumphant; and he would not write, or let me write, so often as he wished, because the postage cost two and four pence. Then came two or three of your poor Mother's letters nearly together; and the two & four pences he wished, but grudged, to pay for his own, he was forced to pay for hers. In this dismal distress, he applied to Fenwick to get his friend Motley to send them free from Portsmouth. This Mr. Fenwick could have done for half a word's speaking; but this he did not do! Then Charles foolishly & unthinkingly complained to your brother in a half serious, half joking way; & your brother has wickedly, and with malice afore thought, told your Mother. O fye upon him! what will your Mo-

Lamb's constant apprehensions of the recurrence of his sister's malady were soon realized. An old maid-servant who assisted her in the lodging became ill; Miss Lamb incessantly watched the death-bed; and just as the poor creature died, was again seized with madness. He placed her under medical care. It would seem from his letters of this time, that the natural determination of Lamb "to take what pleasure he could between the acts of his distressful drama," had led him into a wider circle of companionship, and had prompted sallies of wilder and broader mirth, which afterwards softened into delicacy, retaining all its whim. A passage, which concludes one of his letters to Manning, else occupied with merely personal details, proves that his apprehensions for the diminution of his reverence for sacred things were not wholly unfounded; while, amidst its grotesque expressions, may be discerned the repugnance to the philosophical infidelity of some of his companions he retained through life. It may, perhaps, be regarded as a sort of desperate compromise between a wild gaiety and religious impressions obscured

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ther think of us? By entreaties & prayers I might have prevailed on my brother to say nothing about it. But I make a point of conscience never to interfere or cross my brother in the humour he happens to be in. Charles is sadly fretted now, I know, at what to say to your Mother. Say to her it was a jest misunderstood; tell her Charles Lamb is not the shabby fellow she & her son took him for; but that he is now & then a trifle whimsical or so. I do not ask your brother to do this, for I am offended with him for the mischief he has made."

She adds: "I have known many single men I should have liked in my life (*if it had suited them*) for a husband. But very few husbands have I ever wished was mine, which is rather against the state in general; but one never is disposed to envy wives their good husbands. So much for marrying—but however get married, if you can."—**F.**

but not effaced; and intimating his disapprobation of infidelity, with a melancholy sense of his own unworthiness seriously to express it. Indeed in all his letters to Manning a vein of wild humour breaks out, of which there are but slight indications in the correspondence with his more sentimental friends; as if the very opposition of Manning's more scientific power to his own force of sympathy provoked the sallies which the genial kindness of the mathematician fostered. The prodigal and reckless humour of some of these letters forms a striking contrast to the deep feeling of the earlier letters to Coleridge. His "Essays of Elia' show the harmonious union of both.

During this year (1800) Lamb carried into effect his purpose of removing to Mitre Court Buildings, Temple. During this time he wrote only a few poems. Meanwhile he had engaged to spend a few days when he could obtain leave, with Manning at Cambridge, and, just as he hoped to accomplish his wish, received an invitation from Lloyd to give his holiday to the poets assembled at the Lakes. In the joyous excitement of spirits which the anticipated visit to Manning produced, he played off Manning's proposal on his friend, and abused mountains and luxuriated in his love of London.

He was presently called on to "assist" at the production of a tragedy, by a friend, whose more mature reputation gave him readier access to the manager, but who had no better claim to success than himself. Mr. Godwin, whose powerful romance of Caleb Williams had supplied the materials for "The Iron Chest" of Colman, naturally aspired, on his own account, to the glory of the scene, and completed a tragedy under the title of "Antonio; or, the Soldier's

Return," which was accepted at Drury-lane Theatre, and was announced for representation on Saturday, the 13th December in this year. Lamb supplied the epilogue.

Alas for human hopes! The play was decisively damned, and the epilogue shared its fate. The tragedy turned out a miracle of dulness for the world to wonder at, although Lamb always insisted it had one fine line, which he was fond of repeating—sole relic of the else forgotten play.[1] Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, the brother and sister of the play, toiled through four acts and a half without applause or disapprobation; one speech was not more vapid than another; and so dead was the level of the dialogue, that, although its destiny was seen from afar, it presented no opportunity for hissing. But as the play drew towards a close, when, after a scene of frigid chiding not vivified by any fire of Kemble's own, Antonio drew his sword and plunged it into the heroine's bosom, the "sad civility" of the audience vanished, they started as at a real murder, and hooted the actors from the stage. "Philosophy," which could not "make a Juliet," sustained the author through the trial. He sat on one of the front benches of the pit, unmoved amidst the storm. When the first act passed off without a hand, he expressed his satisfaction at the good sense of the house; "the proper season of applause had not arrived;" all was exactly

[1] In the fourth scene of that tragedy, where the description of the Pagan deities occurs. "In speaking of Saturn, he is figured as 'an old man melancholy.' 'That was *my* line,' Lamb would say, exultingly. I forget how it was originally written, except that it had not the extra (or eleventh) syllable, which it now has."—*Procter*.—F.

as it should be. The second act proceeded to its close in the same uninterrupted calm; his friends became uneasy, but still his optimism prevailed; he could afford to wait. And though he did at last admit the great movement was somewhat tardy, and that the audience seemed rather patient than interested, he did not lose his confidence till the tumult arose, and then he submitted with quiet dignity to the fate of genius, too lofty to be understood by a world as yet in its childhood! Notwithstanding this rude repulse, Mr. Godwin retained his taste for the theatre to the last. On every first night of a new piece, whether tragedy, comedy, or farce, whether of friend or foe, he sat with gentle interest in a side-box, and bore its fate, whatever it might be, with resignation, as he had done his own.[1]

The ominous postponement of Lamb's theatrical hopes was followed by their disappointment at the commencement of the century. He was favoured with at least one interview by the stately manager of Drury Lane, Mr. Kemble, who extended his high-bred courtesy even to authors, whom he invariably attended to the door of his house in Great Russell Street, and bade them "beware of the step." Godwin's catastrophe had probably rendered him less solicitous to encounter a similar peril; which the fondest admirers of "John Woodvil" will not regret that it escaped. While the occasional roughness of its verse would have been felt as strange to ears as yet unused to the old dramatists whom Lamb's Specimens had not then made familiar to the town, the delicate beauties

[1] Lamb's grotesque account of the scene will be found in a retrenched passage of one of his Essays.—F.

enshrined within it would scarcely have been perceived in the glare of the theatre. Exhibiting "the depth, and not the tumults of the soul,"—presenting a female character of modest and retiring loveliness and noble purpose, but undistracted with any violent emotion,—and developing a train of circumstances which work out their gentle triumphs on the heart only of the hero, without stirring accident or vivid grouping of persons,—it would scarcely have supplied sufficient of coarse interest to disarm the critical spirit which it would certainly have encountered in all its bitterness. Lamb cheerfully consoled himself by publishing it; and at the close of the year 1801 it appeared in a small volume, of humble appearance, with the "Fragments of Burton" (to which Lamb alluded in one of his previous letters), two of his quarto ballads, and the "Helen" of his sister.

The daring peculiarities attracted the notice of the Edinburgh reviewers, then in the infancy of their slashing career, and the volume was immolated, in due form, by the self-constituted judges, who, taking for their motto "*Judex damnatur cùm nocens absolvitur*," treated our author as a criminal convicted of publishing, and awaiting his doom from their sentence. With the gay recklessness of power, at once usurped and irresponsible, they introduced Lord Mansfield's wild construction of the law of libel into literature; like him, holding every man *primâ facie* guilty, who should be caught in the act of publishing *a book*, and referring to the court to decide whether sentence should be passed on him. The article on "John Woodvil," which adorned their third number, is a curious example of the old style of criticism vivified by the impulses of youth. We wonder now

—and probably the writer of the article, if he is living, will wonder with us—that a young critic should seize on a little eighteen-penny book, simply printed, without any preface: make elaborate merriment of its outline, and, giving no hint of its containing one profound thought or happy expression, leave the reader of the review at a loss to suggest a motive for noticing such vapid absurdities. This article is written in a strain of grave banter, the theme of which is to congratulate the world on having a specimen of the rudest condition of the drama, "a man of the age of Thespis." "At length," says the reviewer, "even in composition a mighty veteran has been born. Older than Æschylus, and with all the spirit of originality, in an age of poets who had before them the imitations of some thousand years, he comes forward to establish his claim to the ancient *hircus*, and to satiate the most remote desires of the philosophic antiquary." On this text the writer proceeds, selecting for his purpose whatever, torn from its context, appeared extravagant and crude, and ending without the slightest hint that there is merit, or promise of merit, in the volume. There certainly was no malice, or desire to give pain, in all this; it was merely the result of the thoughtless adoption, by lads of gaiety and talent, of the old critical canons of the Monthly Reviews, which had been accustomed to damn all works of unpatronized genius in a more summary way, and after a duller fashion. These very critics wrought themselves into good-nature as they broke into deeper veins of thought; grew gentler as they grew wiser: and sometimes, even when, like Balaam, they came to curse, like him, they ended with "blessing altogether,"

as in the review of the "Excursion," which, beginning in the old strain, "This will never do," proceeded to give examples of its noblest passages, and to grace them with worthiest eulogy. And now, the spirit of the writers thus ridiculed, especially of Wordsworth, breathes through the pages of this very Review, and they not seldom wear the "rich embroidery" of the language of the poet once scoffed at by their literary corporation as too puerile for the nursery.

The year 1803 passed without any event to disturb the dull current of Lamb's toilsome life. He wrote nothing this year, except some newspaper squibs. His occasional connection with newspapers introduced him to some of the editors and contributors of that day, who sought to repair the spirit wasted by perpetual exertion, in the protracted conviviality of the evening, and these associates sometimes left poor Lamb with an aching head, and a purse exhausted by the claims of their necessities upon it. Among those was Fenwick, immortalised as the *Bigod* of "Elia," who edited several ill-fated newspapers in succession, and was the author of many libels, which did his employers no good and his Majesty's government no harm. This year he also wrote the delightful little poem on the death of Hester Savory. This he sent to Manning at Paris, with the following account of its subject:—

"Dear Manning, I send you some verses I have made on the death of a young Quaker you may have heard me speak of as being in love with for some years while I lived at Pentonville, though I had never spoken to her in my life. She died about a month since. If you have interest with the Abbé de Lisle,

you may get 'em translated: he has done as much for the Georgics."

The verses must have been written in the very happiest of Lamb's serious mood. I cannot refrain from the luxury of quoting the conclusion, though many readers have it by heart.

"My sprightly neighbour, gone before
To that unknown and silent shore!
Shall we not meet as heretofore,
Some summer morning.

When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
A bliss that would not go away,
A sweet forewarning?"

There is no vestige of Lamb's correspondence in the year 1804, nor does he seem to have written for the press. This year, however, added to his list of friends—one in whose conversation he took great delight, until death severed them—William Hazlitt. This remarkable metaphysician and critic had then just completed his first work, the "Essay on the Principles of Human Action," but had not entirely given up his hope of excelling as a painter. After a professional tour through part of England, during which he satisfied his sitters better than himself, he remained some time at the house of his brother, then practising as a portrait painter with considerable success; and while endeavouring to procure a publisher for his work, painted a portrait of Lamb.[1]

[1] Some extracts from Mary Lamb's letters, of this period, will give an idea of the secret gloom that overhung this *ménage*. It suggests the painful influences brother and sister had to struggle against, and that there were in that household other dismal elements. This indeed

It is one of the last of Hazlitt's efforts in an art which he afterwards illustrated with the most ex-

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was only to be expected, and is scarcely hinted at in Talfourd's equable narrative.

Miss Lamb wrote in Sept., 1805: —"If I possibly can, I will prevail upon Charles to write to your brother; but he is so unwell, I almost fear the fortnight will slip away before I can get him in the right vein, indeed, it has been sad & heavy times with us lately: when I am pretty well, his low spirits throws me back again; & when he begins to get a little chearful, then I do the same kind office for him. I heartily wish for the arrival of Coleridge; a few such evenings as we have sometimes passed with him would wind us up, and set us a going again. Do not say any thing, when you write, of our low spirits—it will vex Charles. You would laugh, or you would cry, perhaps both, to see us sit together, looking at each other with long and rueful faces, & saying, 'how do you do?' & 'how do you do?' and then we fall a-crying, & say we will be better on the morrow."

Again in November:

"Your kind heart will, I know, even if you have been a little displeased, forgive me, when I assure you my spirits have been so much hurt by my last illness, that at times I hardly know what I do. I do not mean to alarm you about myself, or to plead an excuse; but I am very much otherwise than you have always known me. I do not think any one perceives me altered, but I have lost all self-confidence in my own actions, & one cause of my low spirits is, that I never feel satisfied with any thing I do—a perception of not being in a sane state perpetually haunts me."

What follows opens up further the troubled interior:—"Charles is very busy at the Office; he will be kept there to-day till seven or eight o'Clock: and he came home very *smoky* & *drinky* last night; so that I am afraid a hard day's work will not agree very well with him.

"*March* [*May*] 14.—Here I was interrupted; and a long, tedious interval has intervened, during which I have had neither time nor inclination to write a word. The Lodging—that pride and pleasure of your heart & mine, is given up, *and here he is again*—Charles, I mean—as unsettled and as undetermined as ever. When he went to the poor lodging, after the hollidays I told you he had taken, he could not endure the solitariness of them, and I had no rest for the sole of

quisite criticism which the knowledge and love of it could inspire.

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my foot till I promised to believe his solemn protestations that he could & would write as well at home as there. Do you believe this?

"I have no power over Charles—he will do—what he will do. But I ought to have some little influence over myself. You shall hear a good account of me, and the progress I make in altering my fretful temper to a calm and quiet one. It is but being once thorowly convinced one is wrong, to make one resolve to do so no more; and I know my dismal faces have been almost as great a drawback upon Charles's comfort, as his feverish, teazing ways have been upon mine. Our love for each other has been the torment of our lives hitherto. I am most seriously intending to bend the whole force of my mind to counteract this, and I think I see some prospect of success.

"Of Charles ever bringing any work to pass at home, I am very doubtful; and of the farce succeeding, I have little or no hope; but if I could once get into the way of being chearful myself, I should see an easy remedy in leaving town & living cheaply, almost wholly alone; but till I do find we really are comfortable alone, and by ourselves, it seems a dangerous experiment. We shall certainly stay where we are till after next Christmas."—*Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb.*—F.

CHAPTER IV.

[1806—1815.]

"Mr. H."—Temple Lane.—The "Quarterly Review" attack.

"The first-fruits of my retirement," Lamb wrote to Hazlitt, "has now been a farce which goes to manager to-morrow. *Wish my ticket luck.* God bless you, and do write.—Yours, *fumosissimus*, C. Lamb."

The farce referred to is the delightful *jeu d'esprit*, "Mr. H.," destined to only one night's stage existence, but to become "good jest for ever." It must be confessed that it has not substance enough for a dramatic piece in two acts—a piece which must present a show of real interest—involve its pair of young lovers in actual perplexities—and terminate in the seriousness of marriage![1] It would be rare sport in Milton's "Limbo of Vanity," but is too airy for the ponderous sentimentalism of the modern school of farce. As Swift, in "Gulliver," brings everything to the standard of size, so in this farce everything is reduced to an alphabetical standard. Humour is sent to school to learn its letters; or, rather, letters are made instinct with the most delicate humour. It is the apotheosis of the alphabet, and teaches the value of a good name without the least hint of moral

[1] Leigh Hunt thought that had the name been "Mr. Horridface, or Mr. Hangman, or Mr. Howl or Hellish," etc., the effect would have been better.—F.

purpose.[1] This mere pleasantry—this refining on sounds and letters—this verbal banter, and watery collision of the pale reflexions of words, could not succeed on a stage which had begun to require interest, moral or immoral, to be interwoven with the web of all its actions; which no longer rejoiced in the riot of animal spirits and careless gaiety; which no longer permitted wit to take the sting from evil, as well as the load from care; but infected even its prince of rakes, Charles Surface, with a cant of sentiment which makes us turn for relief to the more honest hypocrite his brother. Mr. H. "could never *do*;" but its composition was pleasant, and its acceptance gave Lamb some of the happiest moments he ever spent.[2]

Wednesday, 10th December, 1806, was the wished-for evening which decided the fate of "Mr. H." on the boards of Drury. Great curiosity was excited by the announcement; the house was crowded to the ceiling; and the audience impatiently awaited the conclusion of the long, dull, intolerable opera of "The Travellers," by which it was preceded. At length, Mr. Elliston, the hero of the farce, entered, gaily dressed, and in happiest spirits—enough, but not too much, elated—and delivered the prologue with great vivacity and success. The farce began; at first it was much applauded; but the wit seemed wire-drawn; and when the curtain fell on the first act, the friends of the author began to fear. The second act dragged

[1] This is a too exaggerated estimate of the merits of the piece, which is undramatic in construction. In Alibone's Dictionary it is stated that it was acted with success at Philadelphia.—F.

[2] Mary Lamb carried it herself to Drury Lane. "He was very civil to me," she says of Wroughton the manager.—F.

heavily on, as second acts of farces will do; a rout at Bath, peopled with ill-dressed and over-dressed actors and actresses, increased the disposition to yawn; and when the moment of disclosure came, and nothing worse than the name *Hogsflesh* was heard, the audience resented the long play on their curiosity, and would hear no more. Lamb, with his sister, sat, as he anticipated, in the front of the pit, and having joined in encoring the epilogue, the brilliancy of which injured the farce, he gave way with equal pliancy to the common feeling, and hissed and hooted as loudly as any of his neighbours. The next morning's playbill contained a veracious announcement, that "*the new farce of* MR. H., *performed for the first time last night, was received by an overflowing audience with universal applause, and will be repeated for the second time to-morrow;*" but the stage lamps never that morrow saw! Elliston would have tried it again: but Lamb saw at once that the case was hopeless, and consoled his friends with a century of puns for the wreck of his dramatic hopes.[1]

[1] It was thus announced. "To-morrow The Travellers, after which (never acted) a new Farce in two acts, called 'Mr. H——.' The characters by Mr. Elliston, Mr. Bartley, Mr. Wewitzer, Miss Mellon, Miss Tidswell," etc. The performance was thus criticised in the *Morning Chronicle*:—"Last night, after the opera of The Travellers, a new Farce was produced here, entitled 'Mr. H——.' This air of mystery had the effect of attracting a very numerous audience. Before the rising of the curtain, and for some time after, many conjectures were formed respecting the name, and a few of the spectators seemed disposed to concur with some of the personages of the piece, in the supposition that he must turn out to be no other than the Prince of Hesse in disguise." An account follows of the plot. "The idea certainly might have afforded material for a laughable entertainment, as it may be easily conceived that the fear of discovery might have brought Mr. H——

From this period, the letters of Lamb which have been preserved are comparatively few, with reference

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into many awkward predicaments, and his excessive irritability respecting his name occasioned much ludicrous conversation. The author has not by any means made so much of it as he might have done. At the same time he did not entirely fail, for the horror of Mr. H. at his own name, and his embarrassment from the eagerness of everybody to discover it, was tolerably supported. But there were defects in the piece, which justified a part of the disapprobation which it experienced towards the close. The chief of these were, first, the excessive length to which the puns on the name were carried after the discovery; and secondly, the want of prominent characters. . . . This excessive punning produces disgust rather than laughter. The only character of any consequence is Mr. H. himself, and he, unfortunately, is not managed so as to enable him to support completely the interest of the piece. The unexpected change of name seemed to shock from its improbability, and the pun attached to it rather increased the disgust. The conclusion, too, was exceedingly tame and ill-managed. If, however, the most obnoxious of the puns were struck out, and a more interesting concluding scene devised, the piece might be tolerable. Certainly, even as it is, more insipid farces have been endured, and the dissatisfaction with which it was received was greater than the occasion called for. A considerable number, however, declared in its favour, and it was given out for a second representation on Friday." The author, Hazlitt, and Mr. Crabb Robinson sat together in the front row of the pit. The reception of the prologue was encouraging, and it was believed that had a less ponderous piece than The Travellers opened the performance the piece might have succeeded. His two companions were astonished to find him joining in the hisses. Lewis the actor declared, that with judicious curtailment it would even have been popular. Even now, when its author's reputation is established, it would be found amusing, and certainly interesting, if compressed into a one-act piece. On the following morning it was announced for Friday evening; but in the programme of that day appeared the following:—"*** The new farce of Mr. H—— is withdrawn at the request of the author;" and "Three Weeks after Marriage" was substituted. "Much whim," said the *Daily Advertiser*, "was expected. The piece was completely condemned." The laborious Geneste declares "that worse farces than this have been successful."—F.

to the years through which they are scattered. He began to write in earnest for the press, and the time thus occupied was withdrawn from his correspondents, while his thoughts and feelings were developed by a different excitement, and expressed in other forms. In the year 1807 the series of stories founded on the plays of Shakspeare, referred to in his last letter to Manning, was published; in which the outlines of his plots are happily brought within the apprehension of children, and his language preserved wherever it was possible to retain it; a fit counterpoise to those works addressed to the young understanding, to which Lamb still cherished the strong distaste which broke out in one of his previous letters. Of these tales, King Lear, Macbeth, Timon of Athens, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, and Othello, are by Charles, and the others by Mary Lamb; hers being, as Lamb always insisted, the most felicitous, but all well adapted to infuse some sense of the nobleness of the poet's thoughts into the hearts of their little readers. He had two other works preparing for the press.

Miss Lamb, also, sought to contribute to her brother's scanty income by presenting the plots of some of Shakespeare's plays in prose, with the spirit of the poet's genius interfused, and many of his happiest expressions preserved, in which good work Lamb assisted her; though he always insisted, as he did in reference to "Mrs. Leicester's School," that her portions were the best.

During the next year they produced their charming little book of "Poetry for Children," and removed from Mitre Court to Southampton Buildings, but only for a few months, and preparatory to a settlement (which meant to be final) in those rooms in Inner

Temple Lane,—most dear of all their abodes to the memory of their ancient friends—where first I knew them. The change produced its natural and sad effect on Miss Lamb.[1]

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[1] Here is Mary Lamb's quaint sketch of the place, written four years later:—"We still live in Temple Lane, but I am now sitting in a room you never saw; soon after you left us we were distressed by the cries of a cat, which seemed to proceed from the garrets adjoining to ours, and only separated from ours by the locked door on the farther side of my brother's bedroom, which you know was the little room at the top of the kitchen stairs. We had the lock forced and let poor puss out from behind a panel of the wainscot, and she lived with us from that time, for we were in gratitude bound to keep her, as she had introduced us to four untenanted, unowned rooms, and by degrees we have taken possession of these unclaimed apartments—first putting up lines to dry our clothes, then moving my brother's bed into one of them, more commodious than his own room. And last winter, my brother being unable to pursue a work he had begun, owing to the kind interruptions of friends who were more at leisure than himself, I persuaded him that he might write at his ease in one of these rooms, as he could not then hear the door knock, or hear himself denied to be at home, which was sure to make him call out and convict the poor maid in a fib. Here, I said, he might be almost really not at home. So I put in an old grate, and made him a fire in the largest of these garrets, and carried in one table and one chair, and bid him write away, and consider himself as much alone as if he were in some lodging on the midst of Salisbury Plain, or any other wide unfrequented place where he could expect few visitors to break in upon his solitude. I left him quite delighted with his new acquisition, but in a few hours he came down again with a sadly dismal face. He could do nothing, he said, with those bare whitewashed walls before his eyes. He could not write in that dull unfurnished prison.

"The next day, before he came home from his office, I had gathered up various bits of old carpeting to cover the floor; and, to a little break the blank look of the bare walls, I hung up a few old prints that used to ornament the kitchen, and after dinner, with great boast of what an improvement I had made, I took Charles once more into his new study. A week of busy labours followed, in which I think you would not have disliked to have been our assistant. My brother and I

A journey into Wiltshire, to visit Hazlitt, followed Miss Lamb's recovery. Martin Burney and a large company were of the party.[1]

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almost covered the walls with prints, for which purpose he cut out every print from every book in his old library, coming in every now and then to ask my leave to strip a fresh poor author—which he might not do, you know, without my permission, as I am elder sister. There was such pasting, such consultation where their portraits, and where a series of pictures from Ovid, Milton, and Shakespeare would show to most advantage, and in what obscure corner authors of humbler note might be allowed to tell their stories. All the books gave up their stories but one—a translation from Ariosto—a delicious set of four-and-twenty prints, and for which I had marked out a conspicuous place; when lo! we found at the moment the scissors were going to work that a part of the poem was printed at the back of every picture. What a cruel disappointment! To conclude this long story about nothing, the poor despised garret is now called the print room, and is become our most favourite sitting-room."—Mary Lamb to Miss Betham, Nov. 2, 1814.

Mr. Crabb Robinson says the place was little more than "a garret;" and in his diary, Talfourd's allusion to its disastrous effect on Mary Lamb receives significant confirmation. In 1810, Mr. Robinson wrote that she was "in a feeble and tottering condition. *Water prescribed.*" The amiable motive of her brother's abstinence appears to have been a wish to encourage and support her; and though the practice improved his health, yet when in low spirits it left him without a remedy.—F.

[1] As a large company was invited; and Mary Lamb, with touching forethought, seems to have sent the hostess a contribution to defray the extra expense, "We can spare you also just five pounds," she wrote. "You are not to say this to Hazlitt, lest his delicacy should be alarmed; but I tell you what Martin and I have planned, that, if you happen to be empty pursed at this time, you may think it as well to make him up a bed in the best kitchen.

"I think it very probable that Phillips will come; and, if you do not like such a crowd of us, for they both talk of staying a whole month, tell me so, and we will put off our visit to next summer.

"The 14th July is the day Martin has fixed for *coming*. I should have written before, if I could have got a positive answer from them."—F.

Yours truly
C Lamb

But the country excursions, with which Lamb sometimes occupied his weeks of vacation, were taken with fear and trembling—often foregone—and finally given up, in consequence of the sad effects which the excitement of travel and change produced in his beloved companion.

Two new works were shortly after published. "The Adventures of Ulysses" had some tinge of the quaintness of Chapman; it gives the plot of the earliest and one of the most charming of romances, without spoiling its interest. The "Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakspeare," were received with more favour than Lamb's previous works, though it was only by slow and imperceptible degrees that they won their way to the apprehensions of the most influential minds, and wrought out the genial purpose of the editor in renewing a taste for the great contemporaries of Shakspeare. *The Monthly Review* vouchsafed a notice in its large print, upon the whole favourable, according to the existing fashion of criticism, but "craftily qualified." It will scarcely be credited, without reference to the article itself, that on the notes the critic pronounces this judgment: "The notes before us indeed have nothing very remarkable, except the style, which is formally abrupt and elaborately quaint. Some of the most studied attempts to display excessive feeling we had noted for animadversion, but the task is unnecessary," etc.

It is easy to conceive of readers strongly dissenting from some of the passionate eulogies of these notes, and even taking offence at the boldness of the allusions; but that any one should read these essences of criticism, suggesting the profoundest thoughts, and

replete throughout with fine imagery, and find in them "nothing remarkable," is a mystery which puzzles us. But when the same critic speaks of the heroine of the "Broken Heart" as "the light-heeled Calantha," it is easy to appreciate his fitness for sitting in judgment on the old English drama and the congenial expositor of its grandeurs!

In the autumn, the establishment of a Quarterly Magazine, entitled the *Reflector*, opened a new sphere for Lamb's powers as a humorist and a critic. Its editor, Mr. Leigh Hunt, having been educated in the same school, enjoyed many associations and friendships in common with him, and was thus able to excite in Lamb the greatest motive for exertion in the zeal of kindness. In this Magazine appeared some of Lamb's noblest effusions; his essay "On Garrick and Acting," which contains the character of Lear, perhaps the noblest criticism ever written, and on the noblest human subject; his delightful "Essays on Hogarth;" his "Farewell to Tobacco," and several of the choicest of his gayer pieces.

The number of the *Quarterly Review*, for December, 1811, contained an attack upon Lamb, which it would be difficult, as well as painful, to characterise as it deserves. Mr. Weber, in his edition of "Ford," had extracted Lamb's note on the catastrophe of "The Broken Heart," in which Lamb, speaking of that which he regarded as the highest exhibition of tragic suffering which human genius had depicted, dared an allusion which was perhaps too bold for those who did not understand the peculiar feeling by which it was suggested, but which no unprejudiced mind could mistake for the breathing of other than a pious spirit. In reviewing Mr. Weber, the critic, who was also the

editor of the Review, thus complains of the quotation:—"We have a more serious charge to bring against the editor than the omission of points, or the misapprehension of words. He has polluted his pages with the blasphemies *of a poor maniac*, who, it seems, once published some detached scenes of the 'Broken Heart.' For this unfortunate creature, every feeling mind will find an apology in his calamitous situation; but for Mr. Weber, we know not where the warmest of his friends will find palliation or excuse." It would be unjust to attribute this paragraph to the accidental association of Lamb in literary undertakings with persons like Mr. Hunt, strongly opposed to the political opinions of Mr. Gifford. It seems rather the peculiar expression of the distaste of a small though acute mind for an original power which it could not appreciate, and which disturbed the conventional associations of which it was master, aggravated by bodily weakness and disease.[1]

[1] Talfourd, in his warmth for his friend, taunts the reviewer with having a small but acute mind, with associations "aggravated by bodily weakness and disease." This reproach offends against taste almost as much as the original attack. It would seem incredible indeed, even in those days of personality, that any writer would have made an infirmity of the kind a subject of abuse; this kind of recrimination being in favour, as Lamb has said in one of his "popular fallacies," with the lower and less cultivated classes. It seems that Mr. Gifford meant no more than the conventional terms that were applied in *The Anti-Jacobin* and other Tory organs, to Radicals and Freethinkers, then invariably pronounced to be fools, madmen, or scoundrels. Southey wrote to the publisher, Murray, lamenting that such an unfortunate expression had been used, and received from Gifford the following, dated Feb. 13, 1812:—

"My dear Sir,— . . . I have this moment received your last letter to Murray. It has grieved and shocked me beyond expression; but, my dear friend, I am innocent, as far as the intent goes. I call God to

Notwithstanding this attack, Lamb was prompted by his admiration for Wordsworth's "Excursion" to contribute a review of that work, on its appearance, to the Quarterly, and he anticipated great pleasure in the poet's approval of his criticism; but when the review appeared, the article was so mercilessly mangled by the editor, that Lamb entreated Wordsworth not to read it. For these grievances Lamb took a very gentle revenge in his sonnet, "Saint Crispin to Mr. Gifford."

Lamb, as we have seen, cared nothing for politics;

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witness that in the whole course of my life I never heard one syllable of Mr. Lamb or his family. I knew not that he ever had a sister, or that he had parents living, or that he or any person connected with him had ever manifested the slightest tendency to insanity. In a word, I declare to you, *in the most solemn manner*, that all I ever knew or ever heard of Mr. Lamb was merely his name. Had I been aware of one of the circumstances which you mention, I would have lost my right arm sooner than have written what I have. The plain truth is, I was shocked at seeing him compare the suffering and death of a person who just continues to dance after the death of her lover is announced (for this is all her merit) to the pangs of Mount Calvary; and not choosing to attribute it to FOLLY, because I reserved that charge for Weber, I unhappily in the present case ascribed it to madness, for which I pray God to forgive me, since the blow has fallen heavily where I really thought it would not be felt. I considered Lamb as a thoughtless scribbler, who, in circumstances of ease, amused himself by writing upon any subject. Why I thought so I cannot tell, but it was the opinion I formed to myself, for I now regret to say I never made any inquiry upon the subject; nor by any accident in the whole course of my life did I hear him mentioned beyond his name."

It must be said that nothing could be more frank or truthful than this explanation; and this genuine distress, as Southey says, makes one think better of Gifford. It was unfortunate that the letter was not found in time to be used in the Biography. Further, on consulting the number, I could not succeed in finding the obnoxious passage: so Gifford must have withdrawn it in the later impressions.—F.

yet his desire to serve his friends sometimes induced him to adopt for a short time their view of public affairs, and assist them with a harmless pleasantry.[1] His epigram on the disappointment of the Whig associates of the Regent, appeared in the *Examiner;* and the better known "Triumph of the Whale," also published in the same paper, would probably have only caused a smile if read by the Regent himself, and may now be republished without offence to any one. At the time when he wrote it, Lamb used to stop any passionate attacks upon the prince, with the smiling remark, "*I* love my Regent."

[1] This scarcely represents the true state of the case. Lamb's political squibs all show a heartiness and bitterness—witness his epigram on Sir J. Mackintosh—which proves that his feelings were engaged. These satires, too, are much more numerous than is supposed. It was only Talfourd's amiable optimism that could have led him to believe that the Regent would have "smiled" on reading "The Whale;" a more bitter, savage onslaught was never made.—F.

CHAPTER V.

[1815 to 1817.]

Lamb's Suppers.

It was at the beginning of the year 1815 that I had first the happiness of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Lamb. With his scattered essays and poems I had become familiar a few weeks before, through the instrumentality of Mr. Barron Field, now Chief Justice of Gibraltar, who had been brought into close intimacy with Lamb by the association of his own family with Christ's Hospital, of which his father was the surgeon, and by his own participation in the *Reflector*. Living then in chambers in Inner Temple Lane, and attending those of Mr. Chitty, the special pleader, which were on the next staircase to Mr. Lamb's, I had been possessed some time by a desire to become acquainted with the writings of my gifted neighbour, which my friend was able only partially to gratify. "John Woodvil," and the number of the *Reflector* enriched with Lamb's article, he indeed lent me, but he had no copy of "Rosamund Gray," which I was most anxious to read, and which, after earnest search through all the bookstalls within the scope of my walks, I found, exhibiting proper marks of due appreciation, in the store of a little circulating library near Holborn. There was something in this little romance so entirely new, yet breathing the air of old acquaintance; a sense of

beauty so delicate and so intense; and a morality so benignant and so profound, that, as I read it, my curiosity to see its author rose almost to the height of pain. The commencement of the new year brought me that gratification; I was invited to meet Lamb at dinner, at the house of Mr. William Evans, a gentleman holding an office in the India House, who then lived in Weymouth Street, and who was a proprietor of the *Pamphleteer*, to which I had contributed some idle scribblings. My duties at the office did not allow me to avail myself of this invitation to dinner, but I went up at ten o'clock, through a deep snow, palpably congealing into ice, and was amply repaid when I reached the hospitable abode of my friend. There was Lamb, preparing to depart, but he stayed half an hour in kindness to me, and then accompanied me to our common home—the Temple.

Methinks I see him before me now, as he appeared then, and as he continued, with scarcely any perceptible alteration to me, during the twenty years of intimacy which followed, and were closed by his death. A light frame, so fragile that it seemed as if a breath would overthrow it, clad in clerk-like black, was surmounted by a head of form and expression the most noble and sweet. His black hair curled crisply about an expanded forehead; his eyes, softly brown, twinkled with varying expression, though the prevalent feeling was sad; and the nose slightly curved, and delicately carved at the nostril, with the lower outline of the face regularly oval, completed a head which was finely placed on the shoulders, and gave importance, and even dignity, to a diminutive and shadowy stem. Who shall describe his countenance —catch its quivering sweetness—and fix it for ever in

words? There are none, alas! to answer the vain desire of friendship. Deep thought, striving with humour; the lines of suffering wreathed into cordial mirth; and a smile of painful sweetness, presents an image to the mind it can as little describe as lose. His personal appearance and manner are not unfitly characterised by what he himself says in one of his letters to Manning of Braham—"a compound of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel." He took my arm, and we walked to the Temple, Lamb stammering out fine remarks as we walked; and when we reached his staircase, he detained me with an urgency which would not be denied, and we mounted to the top story, where an old petted servant, called Becky, was ready to receive us. We were soon seated beside a cheerful fire; hot water and its better adjuncts were before us; and Lamb insisted on my sitting with him while he smoked "one pipe"—for, alas! for poor human nature—he had resumed his acquaintance with his "fair traitress." How often the pipe and the glasses were replenished, I will not undertake to disclose; but I can never forget the conversation · though the first, it was more solemn, and in higher mood, than any I ever after had with Lamb through the whole of our friendship. How it took such a turn between two strangers, one of them a lad of not quite twenty, I cannot tell; but so it happened. We discoursed then of life and death, and our anticipation of a world beyond the grave. Lamb spoke of these awful themes with the simplest piety, but expressed his own fond cleavings to life—to all well-known accustomed things—and a shivering (not shuddering) sense of that which is to come, which he so finely indicated in his "New Year's Eve," years afterwards.

It was two o'clock before we parted, when Lamb gave me a hearty invitation to renew my visit at pleasure; but two or three months elapsed before I saw him again. In the meantime, a number of the *Pamphleteer*, contained an "Essay on the Chief Living Poets," among whom on the title appeared the name of Lamb, and some page or two were expressly devoted to his praises. It was a poor tissue of tawdry eulogies—a shallow outpouring of young enthusiasm in fine words, which it mistakes for thoughts; yet it gave Lamb, who had hitherto received scarcely civil notice from reviewers, great pleasure to find that any one recognised him as having a place among the poets. The next time I saw him, he came almost breathless into the office, and proposed to give me what I should have chosen as the greatest of all possible honours and delights—an introduction to Wordsworth, who I learned, with a palpitating heart, was actually at the next door. I hurried out with my kind conductor, and a minute after was presented by Lamb to the person whom in all the world I venerated most with this preface:—"Wordsworth, give me leave to introduce to you my only admirer."

The years which Lamb passed in his chambers in Inner Temple Lane were, perhaps, the happiest of his life. His salary was considerably augmented, his fame as an author was rapidly extending;[1] he resided

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[1] Many years later he met Moore at breakfasts and dinners; and it is amusing to see the air of patronage with which the poet records his impressions. "A clever fellow certainly," he writes in his diary, "but full of villanous and abortive puns, which he miscarries of every minute." He was, however, pleased with his comic idea of forming a library solely of the heroes of the Dunciad, displacing the Humes, Gibbons, and other respectable authors, "which no gentleman's library

near the spot which he best loved; and was surrounded by a motley group of attached friends, some of them men of rarest parts, and all strongly attached to him and to his sister. Here the glory of his Wednesday nights shone forth in its greatest lustre. If you did not meet there the favourites of fortune; authors whose works bore the highest price in Paternoster Row, and who glittered in the circles of fashion; you might find those who had thought most deeply, felt most keenly, and were destined to produce the most lasting influences on the literature and manners of the age. There Hazlitt, sometimes kindling into fierce passion at any mention of the great reverses of his idol Napoleon, at other times bashfully enunciated the finest criticism on art; or dwelt with genial iteration on a passage in Chaucer; or, fresh from the theatre, expatiated on some new instance of energy in Kean, or reluctantly conceded a greatness to Kemble; or detected some popular fallacy with the fairest and the subtlest reasoning. There Godwin, as he played his quiet rubber, or benignantly joined in the gossip of the day, sat an object of curiosity and wonder to the stranger, who had been at one time shocked or charmed with his high speculation, and at another awe-struck by the force and graphic power of his novels. There Coleridge sometimes, though rarely, took his seat; and then the genial hubbub of voices was still; critics, philosophers, and

should be without." Yet Lamb was delighted with him. "Mister Moore," Mr. Crabb Robinson heard him call out not very distinctly across the table, "will you drink a glass of wine with me?" Then suiting the action to the word, he went on: "Mister Moore, till now I have always felt an antipathy, but now that I have seen you, I shall like you ever after."—F.

poets, were contented to listen; and toil-worn lawyers, clerks from the India House, and members of the Stock Exchange, grew romantic while he spoke. Lamb used to say that he was inferior then to what he had been in his youth; but I can scarcely believe it; at least there is nothing in his early writing which gives any idea of the richness of his mind so lavishly poured out at this time in his happiest moods. Although he looked much older than he was, his hair being silvered all over, and his person tending to corpulency, there was about him no trace of bodily sickness or mental decay, but rather an air of voluptuous repose. His benignity of manner placed his auditors entirely at their ease, and inclined them to listen delighted to the sweet, low tone in which he began to discourse on some high theme. Whether he had won for his greedy listener only some raw lad, or charmed a circle of beauty, rank, and wit, who hung breathless on his words, he talked with equal eloquence; for his subject, not his audience, inspired him. At first his tones were conversational; he seemed to dally with the shadows of the subject and with fantastic images which bordered it; but gradually the thought grew deeper, and the voice deepened with the thought; the stream gathering strength, seemed to bear along with it all things which opposed its progress, and blended them with its current; and stretching away among regions tinted with ethereal colours, was lost at airy distance in the horizon of the fancy. His hearers were unable to grasp his theories, which were indeed too vast to be exhibited in the longest conversation; but they perceived noble images, generous suggestions, affecting pictures of virtue, which enriched their minds and nurtured their

best affections. Coleridge was sometimes induced to recite portions of "Christabel," then enshrined in manuscript from eyes profane, and gave a bewitching effect to its wizard lines. But more peculiar in its beauty than this, was his recitation of Kubla Khan. As he repeated the passage—

> A damsel with a dulcimer
> In a vision once I saw:
> It was an Abyssinian maid,
> And on her dulcimer she played,
> Singing of Mont Abora!

his voice seemed to mount, and melt into air, as the images grew more visionary, and the suggested associations more remote. He usually met opposition by conceding the point to the objector, and then went on with his high argument as if it had never been raised: thus satisfying his antagonist, himself, and all who heard him; none of whom desired to hear his discourse frittered into points, or displaced by the near encounter even of the most brilliant wits. The first time I met him, which was on one of those Wednesday evenings, we quitted the party together between one and two in the morning; Coleridge took my arm and led me nothing loath, at a very gentle pace, to his lodgings, at the Gloucester Coffee House, pouring into my ear the whole way an argument by which he sought to reconcile the doctrines of Necessity and Free-will, winding on through a golden maze of exquisite illustration; but finding no end, except with the termination of that (to me) enchanted walk. He was only then on the threshold of the Temple of Truth, into which his genius darted its quivering and uncertain rays, but which he promised shortly to light

up with unbroken lustre. "I understood a beauty in the words, but not the words:"

> "And when the stream of sound,
> Which overflowed the soul, had passed away,
> A consciousness survived that it had left,
> Deposited upon the silent shore
> Of memory, images and gentle thoughts,
> Which cannot die, and will not be destroyed."

Men of "great mark and likelihood"—attended those delightful suppers, where the utmost freedom prevailed—including politicians of every grade, from Godwin up to the editor of the *New Times*.

Hazlitt has alluded *con amore* to these meetings in his Essay "On the Conversation of Authors,"[1] and

[1] The following is his graphic sketch of these evenings:—"This was formerly the case at Lamb's, where we used to have many lively skirmishes at his Thursday evening parties. I doubt whether the small-coal man's musical parties could exceed them. O! for the pen of John Buncle to consecrate a *petit souvenir* to their memory. There was Lamb himself, the most delightful, the most provoking, the most witty and sensible of men! He always made the best pun and the best remark in the course of the evening. His serious conversation, like his serious writing, is his best. No one ever stammered out such fine, piquant, deep, eloquent things in half a dozen half-sentences, as he does. His jests scald like tears, and he probes a question with a play upon words. What a keen, laughing, hairbrained view of home-felt truth! What choice venom! How often did we cut into the haunch of letters, while we discussed the mutton on the table! How we skimmed the cream of criticism! How we got into the heart of controversy! How we picked out the marrow of authors! And in our flowing cups many a good name and true was freshly remembered. Recollect, most sage and critical reader, that in all this I was but a guest. Need I go over the names. They were the old everlasting set—Milton and Shakespeare, Pope and Dryden, Steele and Addison, Swift and Gay, Smollett, Sterne, Richardson; Hogarth's prints, Claude's landscapes; the cartoons at Hampton Court, and all those things, that, having once been, must ever be. The Scotch novels had not then been

has reported one of the most remarkable discussions which graced them in his Essay "On Persons one would wish to have seen," published by his son, in the two volumes of his remains, which with so affectionate a care he has given to the world. In this was a fine touch of Lamb's pious feeling, breaking through his fancies and his humours, which Hazlitt has recorded, but which cannot be duly appreciated, except by those who can recall to memory the suffused eye and quivering lip with which he stammered out a reference to the name which he would not utter. "There is only one other person I can ever think of after this," said he. "If Shakespeare was to come into the room, we should all rise to meet him; but if

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heard of, so we said nothing about them. In general we were hard upon the moderns. The author of the "Rambler" was only tolerated in Boswell's Life of him; and it was as much as any one could do to edge in a word for Junius. Lamb could not bear Gil Blas. This was a fault. I remember the greatest triumph I ever had was in persuading him, after some years' difficulty, that Fielding was better than Smollett. On one occasion he was for making out a list of persons famous in history that one would wish to see: at the head of whom were Pontius Pilate, Sir Thomas Brown, and Dr. Faustus; but we black-balled most of his list. With what a gusto would he describe his favourite authors, Donne, or Sir Philip Sidney, and call their most crabbed passages delicious! He tried them on his palate as epicures taste olives, and his observations had a smack in them like a roughness on the tongue. With what discrimination he hinted a defect in what he admired most; as in saying that the display of the sumptuous banquet in 'Paradise Lost' was not in true keeping, as the simplest fare was all that was necessary to tempt the extremity of hunger; and stating that Adam and Eve in 'Paradise Lost' were too much like married people. There was no fuss or cant about him, nor were his sweets or his sours ever diluted with one particle of affectation. I cannot say that the party at Lamb's were all of one description. There were honorary members—lay brothers. *Wit and good fellowship* was the motto inscribed over

That Person were to come into it, we should all fall down and kiss the hem of his garment."

Lamb's intention of spending the rest of his days in the Middle Temple was not to be realized. The inconvenience of being in chambers began to be felt as he and his sister grew older, and in the autumn of this year they removed to lodgings in Russell Street, Covent Garden, the corner house. Being now in the immediate neighbourhood of the theatres, Lamb renewed the dramatic associations of his youth, which the failure of one experiment had not chilled. Although he rather loved to dwell on the recollections of the actors who had passed from the stage, than to mingle with the happy crowds who hailed the succes-

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the door. When a stranger came in, it was not asked, 'Has he written anything.' We were above that pedantry, but we waited to see what he could do. If he could take a hand at picquet he was welcome to sit down; . . . we abhorred insipidity, affectation, and fine gentlemen. There was one of our party who never failed to mark 'two for his nob' at cribbage, and he was thought no mean person. This was Ned Philips, and a better fellow in his way breathes not. There was Godwin, who asserted some incredible matter of fact as a likely paradox, and settled all controversies by an *ipse dixit*, a *fiat* of his brain—the Baron Munchausen of politics and practical philosophy. There was Captain Burney, who had you at a disadvantage by never understanding you. There was Jem White, the author of 'Falstaff's Letters,' who the other day left this dull world to go in search of more kindred spirits, 'turning like the latter end of a lover's lute.' There was Ayrton, who sometimes dropped in, the Will Honeycomb of our set; and Mr. Reynolds, who being of a quiet turn, loved to hear a noisy debate. An utterly misinformed person might have supposed this a scene of vulgar confusion and uproar. While the most critical question was pending, while the most difficult problem in philosophy was solving, Philips cried out, 'That's game!' and Martin Burney muttered a quotation over the last remains of a veal pie at a side-table." —*Plain Speaker*, i., p. 79.—F.

sive triumphs of Mr. Kean, he formed some new and steady theatrical attachments. His chief favourites of this time were Miss Kelly, Miss Burrell of the Olympic, and Munden. The first, then the sole support of the English Opera, became a frequent guest in Great Russell Street, and charmed the circle there by the heartiness of her manners, the delicacy and gentleness of her remarks, and her unaffected sensibility, as much as she had done on the stage. Miss Burrell, a lady of more limited powers, but with a frank and noble style, was discovered by Lamb on one of the visits which he paid, on the invitation of his old friend Elliston, to the Olympic, where the lady performed the hero of that happy parody of Moncrieff's, "Giovanni in London." To her Lamb devoted a little article, which he sent to the *Examiner*, in which he thus addresses her:—"But Giovanni, free, fine, frank-spirited, single-hearted creature, turning all the mischief into fun as harmless as toys, or children's *make believe*." Miss Burrell soon married a person named Gould, and disappeared from the stage. To Munden in prose, and Miss Kelly in verse, Lamb has done ample justice.

Among the frequent guests in Inner Temple Lane was Mr. Ayrton, the director of the music at the Italian Opera. At this time Lamb's interest was strongly excited for Mr. Kenney, on the production of his comedy entitled "A Word to the Ladies." He had engaged to contribute the prologue; but the promise pressed hard upon him, and he procured the requisite quantity of verse from a very inferior hand. Kenney, who had married Holcroft's widow,[1] had

[1] Daughter of Mercier, the author of the "Tableau de Paris."—F.

more than succeeded to him in Lamb's regards. Holcroft had considerable dramatic skill; great force and earnestness of style, and noble sincerity and uprightness of disposition; but he was an austere observer of morals and manners; and even his grotesque characters were hardly and painfully sculptured; while Kenney, with as fine a perception of the ludicrous and the peculiar, was more airy, more indulgent, more graceful, and exhibited more frequent glimpses of "the gayest, happiest attitude of things." The comedy met with less success than the reputation of the author and brilliant experience of the past had rendered probable, and Lamb had to perform the office of comforter, as he had done on the more unlucky event to Godwin.

Another of Lamb's new acquaintances was Mr. Charles Ollier, a young bookseller of considerable literary talent, which he has since exhibited in the original and beautiful tale of "Inesilla," who proposed to him the publication of his scattered writings in a collected form. Lamb acceded; and nearly all he had then written in prose and verse, were published this year by Mr. Ollier and his brother, in two small and elegant volumes, of which early copies were despatched to Southey and Wordsworth.

The widening circle of Lamb's literary friends also embraced additional authors and actors,—famous, or just bursting into fame. He welcomed in the author of the "Dramatic Scenes," who chose to appear in print as Barry Cornwall, a spirit most congenial with his own in its serious moods—one whose genius he had assisted to impel towards its kindred models, the great dramatists of Elizabeth's time, and in whose success he received the first and best reward of the

efforts he had made to inspire a taste for these old masters of humanity. Mr. Macready, who had just emancipated himself from the drudgery of representing the villains of tragedy, by his splendid performance of Richard, was introduced to him by his old friend Charles Lloyd, who had visited London for change of scene, under great depression of spirits. Lloyd owed a debt of gratitude to Macready which exemplified the true uses of the acted drama with a force which it would take many sermons of its stoutest opponents to reason away. A deep gloom had gradually overcast his mind, and threatened wholly to encircle it, when he was induced to look in at Covent Garden Theatre, and witness the performance of "Rob Roy." The picture which he then beheld of the generous outlaw,—the frank, gallant, noble bearing,—the air and movements, as one "free of mountain solitudes," —the touches of manly pathos and irresistible cordiality, delighted and melted him, won him from his painful introspections, and brought to him the unwonted relief of tears. He went home "a *gayer* and a wiser man;" returned again to the theatre, whenever the healing enjoyments could be renewed there; and sought the acquaintance of the actor who had broken the melancholy spell in which he was enthralled, and had restored the pulses of his nature to their healthful beatings.[1] The year 1820 gave Lamb an

[1] In Mr. Macready's recently published Diary, is given a fuller account of this curious incident. It seems that shortly after the performance he received a sonnet, which, in some fervent lines, told him what had been the effect of his acting:—

> "That one whose brain was dry—whose dearest rest
> Was death's pale dwelling—he hath felt it start,
> Nature's first gush for years—at thy behest."

interest in Macready beyond that which he had derived from the introduction of Lloyd, arising from the power with which he animated the first production of one of his oldest friends — "Virginius." Knowles had been a friend and disciple of Hazlitt from a boy, and Lamb had liked and esteemed him as a hearty companion; but he had not guessed at the extraordinary dramatic power which lay ready for kindling in his brain, and still less at the delicacy of tact with which he had unveiled the sources of the most profound affections. Lamb had almost lost his taste for acted tragedy, as the sad realities of life had pressed more nearly on him; yet he made an exception in favour of the first and happiest part of "Virginius," those paternal scenes, which stand alone in the modern drama, and which Macready informed with the fulness of a father's affection.

This perpetual influx of visitors whom he could not repel, whom indeed he was always glad to welcome, but whose visits unstrung him, induced him to take lodgings at Dalston, to which he occasionally retired when he wished for repose.[1] The deaths of some

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Not long after he and the author met, when Lloyd told him what had been his sufferings for four years, "a torpor of feeling, and, as it were, a numbness of his faculties." But the relief, as might be expected, was only temporary, and he soon sank back into a state of incurable monomania. Macready met Lamb at Talfourd's, and was particularly "arrided" by his speech, "that the last breath he drew he wished might be through a pipe, and exhaled in a pun."—F.

[1] In 1820 Charles Lamb and his sister paid a visit to Cambridge. "It was a pleasure," says the amiable Crabb Robinson, who met them there, "to be with them. All Lamb's enjoyments are so pure and hearty."—F.

who were dear to him cast a melancholy tinge on his mind, as may be seen in his letters.[1]

[1] That some such retreat was called for, is plain from the round of entertainments—if such it may be called—in which brother and sister lived. Here was Mr. C. Robinson's experience of a week only. On November 13th he met Wordsworth at Lamb's; on the 18th he dined with them at Mr. Monkhouse's; on the 20th he was again at Lamb's to meet Wordsworth; on the next evening came Miss Kelly, Wordsworth again, Stoddart, Barry Cornwall, Talfourd, etc. This series of little festivities—duly celebrated with punch and supper—was wholly unsuited to such excitable natures: and though Sir T. Talfourd puts the matter as delicately as he can, there is no doubt but that flight became a matter of absolute necessity. Then a reaction about as prejudicial followed, and we find the unhappy Mary Lamb chafing against the restraint, and sighing for the old pleasures. "I had rather," she says in one of her letters, "live in Russell Street all my life, and never set my foot but on the London pavement, than be doomed always to enjoy the silent pleasures I now do. We go to bed at ten o'clock—late hours are life-shortening things; but I would rather run all risks, and sit every night—at some places I could name—*wishing in vain at eleven o'clock for the entrance of the supper-tray, than be always up and alive at eight o'clock breakfast*, as I am here." When staying at their Dalston Cottage they lost their brother, John Lamb, in November, 1821. Mr. Crabb Robinson, who visited them, found Mary Lamb "pale and thin," and just recovered from one of her attacks. "They feel their brother's loss, and seem softened by affliction, and to wish for society." Miss Wordsworth was surprised to see how much they took this affliction to heart, considering "there had been so little personal or family communication." —F.

CHAPTER VI.

[1820.]

The "London Magazine" — Wainwright's Story.

Lamb's association with Hazlitt in the year 1820 introduced him to that of the *London Magazine*, which supplied the finest stimulus his intellect had ever received, and induced the composition of the Essays fondly and familiarly known under the fantastic title of *Elia*. The adoption of this signature was purely accidental. His first contribution to the magazine was a description of the Old South Sea House, where Lamb had passed a few months' noviciate as a clerk, thirty years before, and of its inmates who had long passed away; and remembering the name of a gay, light-hearted foreigner, who fluttered there at that time, he subscribed his name to the essay. It was afterwards affixed to subsequent contributions; and Lamb used it until, in his "Last Essays of Elia," he bade it a last farewell.[1] Never was a periodical work commenced with happier auspices, numbering a list of contributors more original in thought, more fresh in spirit, more sportive in fancy, or directed by an editor better qualified by nature and study to preside, than this "London." There was Lamb, with humanity

[1] "To be pronounced *Ell*-ia," he writes to one of his correspondents – F.

ripened among town-bred experiences, and pathos matured by sorrow, at his wisest, sagest, airiest, *in*discreetest, best; Barry Cornwall, in the first bloom of his modest and enduring fame, streaking the darkest passion with beauty; John Hamilton Reynolds, lighting up with the wildest eccentricities and most striking features of many-coloured life with vivid fancy; and, with others of less note, Hazlitt, whose pen, unloosed from the chain which earnest thought and metaphysical dreamings had woven, gave radiant expression to the results of the solitary musings of many years. Over these contributors John Scott presided, himself a critic of remarkable candour, eloquence, and discrimination, unfettered by the dogmas of contending schools of poetry and art; apt to discern the good and beautiful in all; and having, as editor, that which Kent recognised as Lear, which subjects revere in kings, and boys admire in schoolmasters, and contributors should welcome in editors—*authority*;—not manifested in a worrying, teasing, intolerable interference in small matters, but in a judicious and steady superintendence of the whole; with a wise allowance of the occasional excesses of wit and genius. In this respect, Mr. Scott differed entirely from a celebrated poet,[1] who was induced, just a year after, to undertake the Editorship of the *New Monthly Magazine*, an office for which, it may be said, with all veneration for his poetic genius, he was the most unfit person who could be found in the wide world of letters—who regarded a magazine as if it were a long affidavit, or a short answer in Chancery, in which the absolute

[1] Thomas Campbell.—F.

truth of every sentiment and the propriety of every jest were verified by the editor's oath or solemn affirmation; who stopped the press for a week at a comma; balanced contending epithets for a fortnight; and, at last, grew rash in despair, and tossed the nearest, and often the worst article, "unwhipped of justice," to the impatient printer. Mr. Scott, indeed, was more fit to preside over a little commonwealth of authors than to hold a despotic rule over subject contributors; he had not the airy grace of Jeffrey by which he might give a certain familiar liveliness to the most laborious disquisitions, and shed the glancing light of fancy among party manifestoes;—nor the boisterous vigour of Wilson, riotous in power, reckless in wisdom, fusing the production of various intellects, into one brilliant reflection of his own master mind;—and it was well that he wanted these weapons of a tyranny which his chief contributors were too original and too sturdy to endure. He heartily enjoyed his position; duly appreciated his contributors and himself; and when he gave audience to some young aspirant for periodical honours at a late breakfast, amidst the luxurious confusion of newspapers, reviews, and uncut novels, lying about in fascinating litter, and carelessly enunciated schemes for bright successions of essays, he seemed destined for many years of that happy excitement in which thought perpetually glows in unruffled but energetic language, and is assured by the echoes of the world.

Alas! a few days after he thus appeared the object of admiration and envy to a young visitor, in his rooms in York Street, he was stretched on a bed of mental agony—the foolish victim of the guilty custom of a world which would have laughed at him for re-

garding himself as within the sphere of its opinion, if he had not died to shame it! In a luckless hour, instead of seeking to oppose the bitter personalities of *Blackwood* by the exhibition of a serener power, he rushed with spurious chivalry into a personal contest; caught up the weapons which he had himself denounced, and sought to unmask his opponents and draw them beyond the pale of literary courtesy; placed himself thus in a doubtful position in which he could neither consistently reject an appeal to the conventional arbitrament of violence nor embrace it; lost his most legitimate opportunity of daring the unhallowed strife, and found another with an antagonist connected with the quarrel only by too zealous a friendship; and, at last, met his death almost by lamentable accident, in the uncertain glimmer of moonlight, from the hand of one who went out resolved not to harm him![1] Such was the melancholy result

[1] "Mr. Lockhart, the reputed author of 'Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk,' having been violently and personally attacked in the *London Magazine*, came to London for the purpose of obtaining from Mr. Scott an explanation, an apology, or a meeting. Mr. Scott declined unless Mr. Lockhart would first deny that he was the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*. This Mr. Lockhart did not consider it necessary to do, and the correspondence ended with a note from Mr. Lockhart containing very strong and unqualified expressions touching Mr. Scott's personal character and courage. Scott published his account of the affair, and Mr. Lockhart published his, in which he stated that a copy had been sent to Mr. Scott. The copy circulated by Mr. Lockhart contained a denial of his being the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*. The copy sent to Scott did not contain this denial. Scott on this charged Mr. Lockhart with falsehood. The discrepancy between the copies arose from an oversight in printing the statement. But Scott's charge produced a reply from Mr. Christie, who had acted as Mr. Lockhart's friend in the affair, and Mr. Christie's reply led to a challenge from Scott, which was accepted. The parties met at Chalk

—first of a controversy too envenomed—and afterwards of enthralment in usages, absurd in all, but most absurd when applied by a literary man to a literary quarrel. Apart from higher considerations, it may befit a life destined for the listless excesses of gaiety to be cast on an idle brawl;—"a youth of folly, an old age of cards" may be no great sacrifice to preserve the hollow truce of fashionable society; but for men of thought—whose minds are their possession, and who seek to live in the minds of others by sympathy with their thoughts—for *them* to hazard a thoughtful being because they dare not own that they prefer life to death—contemplation to the grave—the preparation for eternity to the unbidden entrance on its terrors, would be ridiculous if it did not become tragical. "Sir, I am a metaphysician!" said Hazlitt once, when in a fierce dispute respecting the colours of Holbein and Vandyke, words almost became things; "and nothing makes an impression upon me but abstract ideas;" and woeful, indeed, is the mockery when thinkers condescend to be duellists!

The Magazine did not perish with its Editor.[1]

Farm at nine o'clock at night, an unusual hour chosen on Mr. Scott's suggestion. Two shots were exchanged: Mr. Christie fired wide the first time, intentionally, but on the second fire his ball entered Mr. Scott's side, and the wound was fatal, Mr. Scott dying on the 27th."—*Life of Haydon.*—F.

[1] Mr. Procter furnishes some agreeable reminiscences of *The London.* "The *London Magazine* was established in January, 1820; the publishers being Messrs. Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, and its editor being Mr. John Scott, who had formerly edited *The Champion* newspaper, and whose profession was exclusively that of a man of letters.

"Mr. John Scott was the writer of several articles entitled 'The living Authors;' of a good many of the earlier criticisms; of some of the papers on politics, and of some which may be termed 'Contro-

Though its unity of purpose was lost, it was still rich in essays of surpassing individual merit; among

versial.' The essays on Sir Walter Scott, Wordsworth, Godwin, and Lord Byron, are from his hand. He contributed also the critical papers, on the writings of Keats, Shelley, Leigh Hunt, and Hazlitt. Mr. Hazlitt wrote all the articles which appear under the head 'Drama;' the twelve essays entitled 'Table Talk;' and the papers on Fonthill Abbey, and on the Angerstein pictures, and the Elgin marbles. Mr. Thomas Carlyle was author of the 'Life and Writings of Schiller,' in the eighth, ninth, and tenth volumes of the Magazine. Mr. de Quincy's contributions were the 'Confessions of an Opium Eater;' also various papers specified as being 'by the Opium Eater;' the essay on Jean Paul Richter, and papers translated from the German, or dealing with German literature. The Reverend Henry Francis Cary (the translator of Dante) wrote the Notices of the Early French poets; the addition to Orford's 'Royal and Noble Authors;' and, I believe, the continuations of Johnson's 'Lives of the Poets.' Mr. Allan Cunningham (the Scottish poet) was author of the 'Twelve Tales of Lyddal Cross,' of the series of stories or papers styled 'Traditional Literature,' and of various other contributions in poetry and prose. Mr. John Poole contributed the 'Beauties of the living Dramatists,' being burlesque imitations of modern writers for the stage, viz., Morton, Dibdin, Reynolds, Moncrieff, etc. Mr. John Hamilton Reynolds wrote, I believe, in every number of the periodical, after it came into the hands of Taylor and Hessey, who were his friends. All the papers with the name of Henry Herbert affixed were written by him; also the descriptive accounts of the Coronation, Greenwich Hospital, The Cockpit Royal, The Trial of Thurtell, etc. Mr. Thomas Hood fleshed his maiden sword here; and his first poems of length, 'Lycus the Centaur' and 'The Two Peacocks of Bedfont' may be found in the Magazine. Mr. George Darley (author of 'Thomas à Becket,' etc.), wrote the several papers entitled 'Dramaticles,' some pieces of verse, and the Letters addressed to 'The Dramatists of the Day.' Mr. Richard Ayton wrote 'The Sea Roamers,' the article on 'Hunting,' and such papers as are distinguished by the signature 'R. A.' Mr. Keats (the poet) and Mr. James Montgomery contributed verses. Sir John Bowring (I believe) translated into English verse the Spanish poetry, and wrote the several papers which appear under the head of 'Spanish Romances.' Mr.

which the masterly vindication of the true dramatic style by Darley; the articles of Cary, the admirable

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Henry Southern (editor of *The Retrospective Review*) wrote the 'Conversations of Lord Byron,' and 'The Fanariotes of Constantinople,' in the tenth volume. Mr. Walter Savage Landor was author of the Imaginary Conversation between Southey and Porson, in volume eight. Mr. Julius (Archdeacon) Hare reviewed the works of Landor in the tenth volume. Mr. Elton contributed many translations from Greek and Latin authors; from the minor poems of Homer, from Catullus, Nonnus, Propertius, etc. Messrs. Hartley Coleridge, John Clare, Cornelius Webb, Bernard Barton, and others sent poems, generally with the indicating name. I myself was amongst the crowd of contributors; and was author of various pieces, some in verse, and others in prose, now under the protection of that great Power which is called 'Oblivion.' Finally, the too celebrated Thomas Griffiths Wainwright contributed various fantasies, on Art and Arts; all or most of which may be recognised by his assumed name of Janus Weathercock. To show the difficulty of specifying the authorship of all the articles contributed,—even Mr. Hessey (one of the proprietors) was unable to do so; and, indeed, shortly before his death, applied to me for information on the subject. By the aid of the gentlemen who contributed—each his quota—to the *London Magazine*, it acquired much reputation, and a very considerable sale. During its career for five years, it had, for a certain style of essay, no superior (scarcely an equal) amongst the periodicals of the day. Yet the Magazine was successful, to an extent that preserved its proprietors from loss, perhaps not greatly beyond that point. On the death of Mr. John Scott, the Magazine, in July, 1821, passed into the hands of Messrs. Taylor and Hessey; the former being the gentleman who discovered the identity of Junius with Sir Philip Francis; the latter being simply very courteous to all, and highly respectable and intelligent.

"When Taylor and Hessey assumed the management of the *London Magazine*, they engaged no editor. They were tolerably liberal paymasters: the remuneration for each page of prose (not very laborious), being, if the writer were a person of repute or ability, one pound, and for each page of verse, two pounds. Charles Lamb received (very fitly) for his brief and charming essays, two or three times the amount of the other writers. When they purchased the Magazine, the proprietors

translator of Dante; and the "Confessions of an English Opium Eater," held a distinguished place. Mr. De Quincy, whose youth had been inspired by enthusiastic admiration of Coleridge, shown in contributions to "The Friend," not unworthy of his master, and substantial contributions of the blessings of fortune, came up to London, and found an admiring welcome from Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, the publishers into whose hands the *London Magazine* had passed. After the good old fashion of the GREAT TRADE, these genial booksellers used to assemble their contributors round their hospitable table in Fleet Street, where Mr. De Quincy was introduced to his new allies. Among the contributors who partook of their professional festivities, was a gentleman whose subsequent career has invested the recollection of his appearances in the familiarity of social life with fearful interest—Mr. Thomas Griffiths Wainwright. He was then a young man; on the bright side of thirty; with a sort of undress military air, and the conversation of a smart, lively, clever, heartless,

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opened a house, in Waterloo Place, for the better circulation of the publication.

"It was there that the contributors met once a month, over an excellent dinner, given by the firm, and consulted and talked on literary matters together. I do not know that many important matters were arranged, for the welfare of the Magazine, at these dinners; but the hearts of the contributors were opened, and with the expansion of the heart the intellect widened also.

"Amongst others, Charles Lamb came to most of these dinners, always dressed in black (his old snuff-coloured suit having been dismissed for years); always kind and genial; conversational, not talkative, but quick in repiy; eating little, and drinking moderately with the rest."

voluptuous coxcomb. It was whispered that he had been an officer in the Dragoons; had spent more than one fortune; and he now condescended to take a part in periodical literature, with the careless grace of an amateur who felt himself above it. He was an artist also; sketched boldly and graphically; exhibited a portfolio of his own drawings of female beauty, in which the voluptuous trembled on the borders of the indelicate; and seized on the critical department of the Fine Arts, both in and out of the Magazine, undisturbed by the presence or pretensions of the finest critic on Art who ever wrote—William Hazlitt. On this subject, he composed for the Magazine, under the signature of "Janus Weathercock," articles of flashy assumption—in which disdainful notices of living artists were set off by fascinating references to the personal appearance, accomplishments, and luxurious appliances of the writer, ever the first hero of his essay. He created a new sensation in the sedate circle, not only by his braided surtouts, jewelled fingers, and various neck-handkerchiefs, but by ostentatious contempt for everything in the world but elegant enjoyment. We lost sight of him when the career of the Magazine ended; and Lamb did not live to learn the sequel of his history. Lamb, who delighted to find sympathy in dissimilitude, fancied that he really liked him; took, as he ever did, the genial side of character; and, instead of disliking the rake in the critic, thought it pleasant to detect so much taste and goodnature in a fashionable *roué;* and regarded all his vapid gaiety, which to severer observers looked like impertinence, as the playful effusion of a remarkably guileless nature.

Thus, when expatiating in his list of choicest

friends in Elia's letter to Southey, he reckons W——, the light and warm, as light-hearted "Janus" of the *London;* and two years afterwards, adverting to the decline of the Magazine, in a letter to Mr. Barton, he persists in his belief of Wainwright's light-heartedness as pertinaciously as all the half-conscious dupes in Othello do in the assertion of Iago's honesty: "They have pulled down Hazlitt, P——, and their their best stay, kind, light-hearted W——, their 'Janus.'" In elucidation of this apparent lightness of heart, it will not be uninstructive to trace the remainder of this extraordinary person's history; for surely no contrast presented by the wildest romance between a gay cavalier, fascinating Naples or Palermo, and the same hero, detected as the bandit or demon of the forest, equals that which time has unveiled between what Mr. Wainwright *seemed*, and what *he was*, Mr. Wainwright having ceased to contribute to *The London* about the year 1825, when Lamb bestowed on him his parting eulogium, was scarcely seen in our literary circle, though he retained the acquaintance and regard of some of its members.

In the year 1830 he was residing at Linden House, Turnham Green, in the possession of which he had succeeded his uncle Dr. Griffiths, who for many years edited a monthly publication, and whose death had occurred about a year before, after a short illness, while Mr. Wainwright and his wife were visiting at his house on the occasion of her confinement with her only child. He acquired some property at the death of his uncle, by whose bounty, being early left an orphan, he had been educated; but his expensive tastes soon brought him to severe pecuniary embarrassments and the verge of ruin. His wife's mother,

who had died in Linden House after a short illness, left two daughters by Mr. Abercrombie her second husband, named Helen Frances Phœbe and Madeline—Mrs. Wainwright being the daughter of a former husband named Ward. These young ladies being left without provision, except a pension of £10 a year each, which had been granted to them as the destitute daughters of a meritorious officer, by the Board of Ordnance, were invited by Mr. Wainwright to visit him at Linden House, and at the beginning of 1830, with his wife and child formed his family.

About this time, he formed the remarkable scheme of procuring the eldest of the young ladies to effect insurances on her life, to the amount of many thousands of pounds, for the period of three or two years. Miss Helen Frances Phœbe Abercrombie was then a lovely woman, nearly of the age of twenty-one, which she attained 12th March, 1830, without expectations, except of some trifling possibility under a settlement, and, except the proceeds of the pension, without a shilling in the world; while Mr. Wainwright, who supplied the funds for this strange speculation, was in reality still poorer, being steeped in debt, impatient of privation, with ruin daily contracting its circle around him. The first proposal was made by Mr. Wainwright, on behalf of Miss Abercrombie, to the Palladium Insurance Office, on the 28th March, for £3000 for three years. On this occasion, Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright and Miss Abercrombie called together at the office, where the object of the insurance was stated to be to enable them to recover some property to which the young lady was entitled. This proposal was accepted, and on the 20th of April completed, by payment of the premium for one year

by the hand of Miss Abercrombie, then attended only by Mrs. Wainwright, and the delivery of the policy. On or about the same day, a similar insurance was effected with the Eagle Insurance Office for £3000, for the term of two years; and the premium for one year and stamp duty were paid by Miss Abercrombie in her sister's presence. In the following October four more policies were effected: with the Provident for £2000, with the Hope for £2000, with the Imperial for £3000, and with the Pelican for £5000, each on the life of Miss Abercrombie, and each for the period of two years; so that at the close of this month of October, the life of this poor girl, described by the actuary of the Provident as "a remarkably healthy, cheerful, beautiful young woman, whose life was one of a thousand," was insured to the amount of £18,000, as to £3000 for three years, and for the residue for two years only. Premiums for one year, amounting with the stamps to something more than £220, had been paid; the premiums which would be required to keep the policies on foot for a second year amounting to £200, and in the event of her surviving the brief terms of insurance, the whole money would be lost. On every visit to the offices, Miss Abercrombie was accompanied by Mrs. Wainwright, and the appearance of these two ladies together on such an errand, sometimes awakened scruples, which the apparent desirableness of the life for insurance to an office did not always silence. At the Imperial, it was suggested to Miss Abercrombie by Mr. Ingall, the actuary, that "as she only proposed to make the insurance for two years, he presumed it was to secure some property she would come into at the expiration of that time?" to which Mrs. Wainwright replied: "Not exactly so;

it is to secure a sum of money to her sister, which she will be enabled to do by other means if she outlives that time. But I don't know much of her affairs; you had better speak to her about it." On which Miss Abercrombie said, "That is the case." By what means the ladies were induced to make these statements can scarcely ever be guessed; it is certain that they were illusory. No reason existed for the poor penniless girl securing £3000 for her sister, in case of her own death within two years; nor was there the least chance of her receiving such a sum if living at the end of that period. The sum of £18,000 did not bound the limits of the speculation; for in the same month of October, a proposal to the Eagle to increase the insurance by the addition of £2000 was made and declined, and a proposal to the Globe for £5000, and a proposal to the Alliance for some further sum, met a similar fate. At the office of the Globe, Miss Abercrombie, who, as usual, was accompanied by Mrs. Wainwright, being asked the object of the insurance, replied, that "she scarcely knew, but she was desired to come there by her friends, who wished the insurance done." On being further pressed, she referred to Mrs. Wainwright, who said, "It is for some money matters that are to be arranged, but ladies don't know much about such things;" and Miss Abercrombie answered a question, whether she was insured in any other office, in the negative. At the Alliance, Helen was more severely tested by the considerate kindness of Mr. Hamilton, who received the proposal, and who was not satisfied by her statement, that a writ was depending in Chancery which would probably terminate in her favour, but that if she should die in the interim the property would go

into another family, for which contingency she wished to provide. The young lady, a little irritated at the question, said, "I supposed that what you had to inquire into was the state of my health, not the object of the insurance;" on which he informed her, "that a young lady such as she was, had come to the office two years before to effect an insurance for a short time, and that it was the opinion of the Company she had come to her death by unfair means." Poor Helen replied, "She was sure there was no one about her who would have any such object," Mr. Hamilton said, "Of course not," but added, "that he was not satisfied as to the object of the insurance, and unless she stated in writing what it was, and the Directors approved it, the proposal could not be entertained." The ladies retired, and the office heard no more of the proposal, nor of Miss Abercrombie, till they heard that she was dead, and that the payment of other policies on her life was resisted. Mr. Wainwright's affairs soon approached a crisis, for he had given a warrant of attorney in August, and a bill of sale on his furniture at Linden House, both of which had become absolute, and seizure under which he had postponed only till the 20th or 21st of December. Early in that month he left Linden House, and took furnished lodgings in Conduit Street, to which he was accompanied by his wife and her two half-sisters. On the 13th of that month, Miss Abercrombie called on a solicitor named Lys, to whom she was a stranger, and requested him to attest the execution of a will she desired to make, as she was going abroad: he complied, and she executed a will in favour of her sister Madeline, making Mr. Wainwright its executor. On the 14th, having obtained a form of assignment

from the office of the Palladium, she called on another solicitor, named Kirk, to whom she was also a stranger, to perfect for her an assignment of the policy of that office to Mr. Wainwright: this the solicitor did, by writing in ink over words pencilled in the handwriting of Mr. Wainwright, and witnessing her signature. On that evening Miss Abercrombie accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright and her sister to the play, as she had done the preceding evening, and partook of oysters, or lobsters, and porter, after their return. The weather was wet, she had walked home as she had done the evening before, and in the night suffered from illness, which was attributed to cold. She continued ill, however, and in a day or two Dr. Locock, who was called in by Mr. Wainwright, found her labouring under derangement of stomach, and prescribed for her simple remedies. She continued indisposed, but he entertained no serious apprehensions, until he was sent for on the 21st, when she died. On that morning a powder, which Dr. Locock did not recollect ever prescribing, was administered to her in jelly, and Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright quitted her to take a long walk for some hours. Soon after their departure she was seized with violent convulsions; the physician was sent for, and was shocked by her condition, and by her exclaiming, "Oh, Doctor! these are the pains of death!" He administered proper remedies for pressure on the brain, under which she was then labouring. The symptoms subsided, and he left her in a state of composure. The convulsions, however, soon returned with increased violence; the attendant, in alarm, called in the assistant of a neighbouring apothecary in the emergency; the young man did for her the best that human skill

could devise, but all assistance was in vain, and before Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright returned from their walk, she was dead. An examination of the body took place with Mr. Wainwright's ready concurrence, which, in Doctor Locock's apprehension, left no reason to attribute the death to other than natural causes. Its immediate cause was obviously pressure on the brain, and the sums amounting to £18,000, insured on her life, became payable to Mr. Wainwright as her executor, though except as to two of the policies—those of the Palladium and the Hope—which had been assigned to him by poor Helen, apparently, at least, for the benefit of the sister.

Suspicion, however, was excited, the offices resisted the claim. Mr. Wainwright left England for France, where he spent several years; and after delays occasioned chiefly by proceedings in Equity, the question of the validity of the policies was tried, before Lord Abinger, on the 29th of June, 1835, in an action by Mr. Wainwright as executor of Miss Abercrombie on the Imperial's policy. Extraordinary as were the circumstances under which the defence was made, it rested on a narrow basis—on the allegation that the insurance was not, as it professed to be, that of Miss Abercrombie for her own benefit, but the insurance of Mr. Wainwright, effected at his cost for some purpose of his own, and on the falsehood of representations she had been induced to make in reply to inquiries as to insurances in other offices. The cause of her death, if the insurance was really hers, was immaterial; and though surely not immaterial in the consideration of the question, whether the insurance was her's or Mr. Wainwright's, was thrown out of the case by Lord Abinger. That accomplished Judge,

who had been the most consummate advocate of his time, disposed always to pleasurable associations, shrunk in a Civil Court from inquiries which, if they had been directly presented on a criminal charge, would have compelled his serious attention, stated that there was no evidence of other crime than fraud, and intimated that the defence had been injured by a darker suggestion. The jury, partaking of the Judge's disinclination to attribute the most dreadful guilt to the plaintiff on a Nisi Prius record, and perhaps scarcely perceiving how they could discover for the imputed fraud an intelligible motive without it, were unable to agree, and were discharged without giving a verdict. The cause was tried again, before the same Judge, on the 3rd December following; when the counsel for the defence, following the obvious inclination of the Bench, avoided the most fearful charge, and obtained a verdict for the Office without hesitation, sanctioned by Lord Abinger's proffered approval to the jury. In the meantime, Mr. Wainwright, leaving his wife and child in London, had acquired the confidence and enjoyed the hospitality of an English officer residing at Boulogne. While he was thus associated, a proposal was made to the Pelican Office to insure the life of his host for £5000; which, as the medical inquiries were satisfactorily answered, was accepted. The Office, however, received only one premium, for the life survived the completion of the insurance only a few months, falling after a very short illness. Under what circumstances Mr. Wainwright left Boulogne after this event is unknown. He became a wanderer in France; and being brought under the notice of the Correctional Police as passing under a feigned name, was arrested.

In his possession was found the vegetable poison called strychnine, which leaves little trace of its passage in the frame of its victim; and which, though unconnected with any specific charge, increased his liability to temporary restraint, and led to a six months' incarceration at Paris. After his release, he returned to revisit London, where, in June, 1837, soon after his arrival, he was met in the street by Forrester the police officer, who had identified him in France, and was committed for trial on a charge of forgery.

The offence for which Mr. Wainwright was thus apprehended was not very heinous of its kind, but his guilt was clear, and the punishment at that time capital. It consisted in the forgery of the names of his own trustees to five successive powers of attorney to sell out stock settled on himself and his wife before their marriage, which his exigencies from time to time had tempted him thus to realize. The Bank of England, by whom he was prosecuted, consented to forego the capital charges on his pleading guilty to the minor offence of uttering in two of the cases, which he did at the Old Bailey Sessions of July, 1837, and received sentence of transportation for life. In the meantime, proceedings were taken on behalf of Miss Abercrombie's sister Madeline, who had married a respectable bookseller named Wheatley, to render the insurances available for her benefit; which induced the prisoner to offer communications to the Insurance Offices which might defeat a purpose entirely foreign to his own; and which he hoped might procure him, through their intercession, a mitigation of the most painful severities incident to his sentence. In this expectation he was miserably disappointed; for though in pursuance of their promise the Directors of one of

the Offices made a communication to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the result, instead of a mitigation, was an order to place him in irons, and to send him to his place of punishment in a vessel about to convey three hundred convicts. Thus terminated the European career of the "kind and light-hearted Janus!" The time has not arrived for exhibiting all the traits of this remarkable person. Probably before it shall arrive the means of disclosing them will be lost, or the objects forgotten; but enough may be found disclosed in the public proceedings, from which we have taken thus far our narrative, to supply an instructive contrast between his outer and inner life; and yet more instructive indications of the qualities which formed the links of connection between them. The defect in his moral nature consisted, perhaps, chiefly in morbid self-esteem, so excessive as to overwhelm all countervailing feelings, and to render all the interests of others, all duties, all sympathies, all regards, subservient to the lightest efforts, or wishes, or enjoyments of the wretched idol. His tastes appreciated only the most superficial beauty; his vanities were the poorest and most empty; yet he fancied himself akin to greatness; and in one of his communications from Newgate, in his last hours of hope, he claimed for himself "a soul whose nutriment is love and its offspring art, music, divine song, and still holier philosophy." When writing from the hold of the convict-ship to complain of his being placed in irons, he said, "They think me a desperado. Me! the companion of poets, philosophers, artists, and musicians, a desperado! You will smile at this—no—I think you will *feel* for the man educated and reared as a gentleman, now the

mate of vulgar ruffians and country bumpkins." This shallow notion of being always "a gentleman"—one abstracted ever from conventional vulgarities—seems to have given him support in the extremity of wretchedness and infamy; the miserable reed he leaned on, not the ruling passion—but the ruling folly. "They pay me respect here, I assure you," said he to an acquaintance who visited him in Newgate; "they think I am here for £10,000;" and on some of the convicts coming into the yard with brooms to perform their compulsory labour of sweeping it, he raised himself up, pulled down his soiled wristbands, and exclaimed, with a faint hilarity—"You see those people, they are convicts like me; but no one dares offer me the broom!" Circumstances were indeed changed, but the *man* was the same as when he elaborated artistic articles for *The London*.[1] To

[1] It may not be uninteresting, nor wholly uninstructive, to place, in contrast with this person's deplorable condition, a specimen of his composition when "topping the part" of a literary coxcomb. The following is a portion of an article under the head of "Sentimentalities on the Fine Arts, by Janus Weathercock, Esq. To be continued when he is in the humour," published in the *London Magazine* for March, 1820:—"I (Janus) had made a tolerable dinner the other day at George's, and with my mind full of my last article, was holding up a *petit verre d'eau de vie de Dantzic* to the waxen candle, watching with scient eye the number of aureate particles, some swimming, some sinking quiveringly, through the oily and luscious liquor, as if informed with life, and gleaming like golden fish in the Whang-ho or Yellow River (which, by the way, is only yellow from its mud): so was I employed, when suddenly I heard the day of the month (the 15th) ejaculated in the next box. This at once brought me back from my delicious reverie to a sense of duty. 'Contributions must be forwarded by the 18th, *at the very latest*,' were the Editor's last words to Janus, and he is incapable of forgetting them. I felt my vigorous personal identity instantly annihilated, and resolved by some mystic process into a part of that unimaginable plurality in unity wherewithal editors,

the last he seemed to be undisturbed by remorse; shocked only at the indignities of the penal condition of one imbued with tastes so refined that all causes

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reviewers, and at present pretty commonly authors, clothe themselves when seated on the topmast tip of their topgallant masts, they pour forth their oracular dicta on the groaning ocean of London, spread out huge at their feet. Forthwith we (Janus) sneaked home alone, poked *in* the top of our hollow fire, which spouted out a myriad of flames, roaring pleasantly as, chasing one another, they rapidly escaped up the chimney; exchanged our smart tight-waisted stiff-collared coat for an easy chintz gown with pink ribbons; lighted our new elegantly-gilt French lamp, having a ground-glass globe painted with gay flowers and gaudy butterflies; hauled forth *Portfolio No.* 9, and established ourselves cosily on a Grecian couch! Then we (Janus) stroked our favourite tortoise-shell cat into a full and sonorous *purr*, and after that our nurse or maid-servant—a good-natured Venetian-shaped girl (having first placed on the table a genuine flask of as rich Montepulciano as ever voyaged from fair Italia)—had gently but firmly closed the door, carefully rendered air-tight by a gilt-leather binding (it is quite right to be particular), we indulged ourselves in a complacent consideration of the rather elegant figure we made, as seen in a large glass placed opposite our chimney-mirror, without, however, moving any limb except the left arm, which instinctively filled out a full cut-glass of the liquor before us, while the right rested inactively on the head of puss! 'It was a sight that turned all our gall into blood! Fancy, comfortable reader! Imprimis, a very good-sized room; item, a gay Brussels carpet covered with garlands of flowers; item, a fine *original* cast of the Venus de Medicis; item, some choice volumes in still more choice old French *moroquin* with water-tabby silk linings; item, some more volumes coated by the skill of Roger Payne and '*our* Charles Lewis;' item, a piano by Tomkinson; item, a Damascus sabre: item, one cat; item, a large Newfoundland dog, friendly to the cat; item, a few hot-house plants on a white marble slab; item, a delicious melting love-painting by Fuseli; and last, not least, in our dear love, *we*, myself, (Janus!) Each and the whole seen by the Correggio-kind of light breathed as it were through the painted glass of the lamp!!! Soothed into that amiable sort of self-satisfaction so necessary to the bodying out those deliciously voluptuous ideas, perfumed with languor, which occasionally swim and undulate like gauzy clouds over the brain of the

ought to give way to their indulgence. This vanity, nurtured by selfishness and unchecked by religion,

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most cold-blooded men, we put forth our hand to the folio which leant against a chair by the sofa's side, and at haphazard extracted thence Lancret's charming 'Repas Italien,' T. P. le Bas. Sculp.:—

"'A summer party in the greenwood shade,
With lutes prepared and cloth on herbage laid,
And ladies' laughter coming thro' the air.'

"L. Hunt's 'Rimin.'

This completed the charm. We immersed a well-seasoned prime pen into our silver inkstand three times, shaking off the loose ink again lingeringly. While holding the print fast in our left hand, we perused it with half-shut eyes, dallying awhile with our delight."

This last portion of the strange history of Wainwright's, which has an almost ghastly interest, was suppressed by Sir T. Talfourd in the later editions of his work, perhaps from a wish not to further prejudice the condition of the criminal, then undergoing his sentence of transportation. In Mr. Dickens' *All the Year Round*, appeared a fuller account of his infamous career, from which I take the following:—

"On the night the Norfolk gentleman in difficulties at Boulogne died, Wainwright had insisted on making his friend's coffee, and passed poison into the sugar. The poisoner had succeeded before this in winning the affections of his friend's daughter, and gaining a supreme influence in the house.

"Being asked in the jail how he could find it in his heart to murder the trusting girl who had so confided in him (meaning Miss Abercrombie), he reflected for a moment, and then returned, with a cool laugh: 'Upon my soul I don't know—unless it was that her legs were too thick.'

"A more insupportable scoundrel never troubled this earth. He had kept a Diary. The insurance offices, by the masterly stroke of sending to a French inn where he had lived, paying the bill he had left unpaid, and demanding the effects he had left there, obtained possession of it. Description of this demoniacal document cannot be attempted, but it contained a kind of index to the details of his various crimes, set forth with a voluptuous cruelty and a loathsome exultation worthy of the diseased vanity of such a masterpiece of evil.

"In 1842, the dandy convict was admitted as in-patient of the General Hospital in Hobart Town, where he remained some years. Whilst

became a disease, perhaps amounting to *monomania*, and yielding one lesson to repay the world for his

an inmate of the hospital, he forwarded to the Governor, Sir Eardley E. Wilmot, the following memorial. It is too characteristic of the man not to be given. The gilt has all gone now. The Governor's minute on the memorial is very laconic:—'A T. L. (ticket-of-leave) would be contrary to Act of Parlt. T. L. refused. *3rd class wages received?* —E. E. W."

"'To His Excellency, Sir John Eardley Wilmot, Bart., Lieut.-Governor of Van Dieman's Land, etc. etc.

"'The humble petition of T. Griffiths Wainwright, praying the indulgence of a ticket-of-leave.

"'To palliate the boldness of this application he offers the statement ensuing. That *seven* years past he was arrested on a charge of forging and acting on a power of attorney to sell stock *thirteen years previous*. Of which (though looking for little credence) he avers his entire innocence. He admits a knowledge of the actual committer, gained though some years after the fact. Such, however, were their relative positions, that to have disclosed it would have made him infamous where any human feeling is manifest. Nevertheless, by his counsel's direction, he entered the plea NOT *Guilty*, to allow him to adduce the "*circonstance attenuante*," viz., that the money (£5200) appropriated was, without quibble, *his own*, derived from his parents. An hour before his appearing to plead he was trepanned (through the just but deluded Governor of Newgate) into withdrawing his plea, by a promise, in such case, of a punishment merely nominal. The same *purporting* to issue from ye *Bank Parlour*, but in fact from the agents of certain *Insurance Companies* interested to a heavy amount (£16,000) in compassing his legal non-existence. He pleaded guilty—and was forthwith hurried, stunned with such ruthless perfidy, to the hulks at Portsmouth, and thence in *five days* aboard the Susan, sentenced to Life in a land (to him) a moral sepulchre. As a ground for your mercy he submits with great deference his foregone condition of life during 43 years of freedom. A *descent*, deduced, through family tradition and *Edmondson's Heraldry*, from a stock not the least honoured in Cambria. Nurtured with all appliances of ease and comfort—schooled by his relative, the well-known philologer and bibliomaniac, Chas. Burney, D.D., brother to Mdme. D'Arblay, and the companion of COOKE. Lastly, such a modest competence as afforded the *mental* necessaries of Literature, Archæology, Music and the Plastic Arts; while his pen and brush in-

existence: that there is no state of the soul so dangerous as that in which the vices of the sensualist

troduced him to the notice and friendship of men whose fame is European. The Catalogues of Somerset House Exhibitions, the *Literary Pocket Book*, indicate his earlier pursuits, and the MS. left behind in Paris, attest at least his industry. Their titles imply the objects to which he has, *to this date*, directed all his energies: "A Philosophical Theory of Design, as concerned with the Loftier Emotions, showing its deep action on Society, drawn from the Phidean-Greek and early Florentine Schools" (the result of seventeen years' study), illustrated with numerous plates, executed with conscientious accuracy, in one vol. atlas folio. "An Æsthetic and Psychological Treatise on the Beautiful; or the Analogies of Imagination and Fancy, as exerted in Poesy, whether Verse, Painting, Sculpture, Music, or Architecture;" to form four vols. folio, with a profusion of engravings by the first artists of Paris, Munich, Berlin, Dresden, and Wien. "An Art-Novel," in three vols., and a collection of "Fantasie, Critical Sketches, etc., selected partly from *Blackwood*, the *Foreign Review*, and the *London Magazine*." All these were nearly ready for, *one* actually at *press*. Deign, your Excellency! to figure to yourself my *actual* condition during seven years; without *friends*, *good name* (the breath of life) or *art* (the fuel to it with *me*), tormented at once by memory and ideas struggling for outward form and realization, barred up from increase of knowledge, and deprived of the exercise of profitable or even of *decorous* speech. Take pity, your Excellency! and grant me the power to shelter my eyes from Vice in her most revolting and sordid phase, and my ears from a jargon of filth and blasphemy that would outrage the cynism (*sic*) of Parny himself. Perhaps this clinging to the lees of a vapid life may seem as *base*, *unmanly*, arguing rather a plebeian, than a liberal and gentle descent. But, your Excellency! the wretched *Exile* has a child!—and *Vanity* (sprung from the praise of Flaxman, *Charles Lamb*, Stothard, Rd. Westall, *Delaroche*, *Cornelius*, Lawrence, and the god of his worship, Fuseli) whispers that the *follower of the Ideal might* even yet achieve another reputation than that of a *Faussaire*. Seven years of steady demeanour may in *some* degree promise that no indulgence shall ever be abused by your Excellency's miserable petitioner, "'T. G. Wainwright.'

"Discharged from the hospital, the elegant-mannered poisoner set up as an artist at Hobart Town, where sketches by him still exist. His

are envenomed by the grovelling intellect of the scorner.

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conversation to lady-sitters was often indelicate. A writer in a Melbourne paper, 6th July, 1841, says of this dangerous and abandoned wretch: 'He rarely looked you in the face. His conversation and manners were winning in the extreme; he was never intemperate, but nevertheless of grossly sensual habits, and an opium-eater. As to moral character, he was a man of the very lowest stamp. He seemed to be possessed by an ingrained malignity of disposition, which kept him constantly on the very confines of murder, and he took a perverse pleasure in traducing persons who had befriended him. There is a terrible story of his savage malignity towards a fellow-patient in the hospital, a convict, against whom he bore a grudge. The man was in a state of collapse—his extremities were already growing cold. Death had him by the throat. Wainwright's snakish eyes kindled with unearthly fire. He saw at once the fatal sign. He stole softly as a cat to the man's pallet, and hissed his exultation in his dying ear:

"'You are a dead man, you——. In four-and-twenty hours your soul will be in hell, and my arms will be up to that (touching his elbow) in your body, dissecting you.'

"Twice this delight of society attempted to poison people who had become obnoxious to him. Even in that polluted corner of the world the man was dreaded, hated, and shunned. His sole friend and companion was a cat, for which he evinced an extraordinary and sentimental affection. He had always been fond of cats. In 1852, this gentlemanly and specious monster was struck down in a moment, as with a thunderbolt, by apoplexy. He had survived his victims sixteen years."—*All the Year Round*, Jan. 5, 1867.

Mr. Forster (*Life of Dickens*, i. 161) thus describes a strange rencontre to which he was witness. "We made together," he says, "a circuit of nearly all the London prisons, and in coming to the prisoners under remand while going over Newgate, accompanied by Macready and Mr. Hablot Browne, were startled by a sudden tragic cry of 'My God! there is Wainwright!' In the shabby-genteel creature, with sandy disordered hair and dirty moustache, who had turned quickly round with a defiant stare at our entrance, looking at once mean and fierce, and quite capable of the cowardly murders he had committed, Macready had been terrified to recognise a man familiarly known to him in former years, and at whose table he had dined." Lord Lytton has drawn Wainwright in his "Lucretia."—F.

CHAPTER VII.

[1822-1823.]

Visit to Paris.—"Elia's" Letter to Southey.—Islington.

In the summer of 1822 Lamb and his sister visited Paris.[1] Soon after his return he became acquainted with the poet of the Quakers, Bernard Barton, who, like

[1] Lamb and his sister set off on their journey on June 18th, accompanied by a French gentleman, and a nurse, in case Mary Lamb should be taken ill. She was a little nervous, but Lamb was in high spirits. Her courage seemed wonderful to Mr. Crabb Robinson, who furnished them with letters to friends in Paris. Their dismal foreboding, and wise provision, were to be unhappily justified by the event. "When at Amiens," says Mrs. Shelley in a letter, "poor Miss L. was taken ill in her usual way, and Lamb was in despair. He met, however, with some acquaintances, who got Miss L. into proper hands; and L. went on to Versailles, and stayed with the Kenneys." This is alluded to by Moore, who, in his light way, adds a painful touch, speaking of Miss Lamb as "the poor woman who went mad with him *in the diligence* on the way to Paris." These and other friends that Lamb met at Paris found him more reserved and silent than was his wont; which was not surprising, considering what was in his thoughts. Charles had to leave her in Paris, and returned to England. She found a warm friend in Mr. Payne, and Mr. Crabb Robinson arriving towards the end of August, devoted some days to visiting the sights of Paris with her. Charles Lamb could not speak a word of French, and Mr. Procter relates, that "he had once intended to ask the waiter for an egg (*œuf*), but called, in his ignorance for *eau-de-vie*, and that the mistake produced so pleasant a result, that his inquiries afterwards for *eau-de-vie* were very frequent."—F.

himself, was engaged in the drudgery of figures. The pure and gentle tones of the poems of his new acquaintance was welcome to Lamb, who had more sympathy with the truth of nature in modest guise than in the affected fury of Lord Byron, or the dreamy extravagancies of Shelley. Lamb had written in "Elia" of the Society of Friends with the freedom of one, who, with great respect for the principles of the founders of their faith, had little in common with a sect who shunned the pleasures while they mingled in the business of the world; and a friendly expostulation on the part of Mr. Barton led to such cordial excuses as completely won the heart of the Quaker bard. Some expression which Lamb let fall at their meeting in London, from which Mr. Barton had supposed that Lamb objected to a Quaker's writing poetry as inconsistent with his creed, induced Mr. Barton to write to Lamb on his return to Woodbridge, who replied to him. Encouraged by Lamb's kindness, Mr. Barton continued the correspondence, which became the most frequent in which Lamb had engaged for many years.

How bitterly Lamb felt his East-India bondage, has abundantly appeared from his letters during many years. Yet there never was wanting a secret consciousness of the benefits which it ensured for him, the precious independence which he won by his hours of toil, and the freedom of his mind, to work only "at its own sweet will," which his confinement to the desk obtained. This sense of the blessings which a fixed income, derived from ascertained duties, confers, was nobly expressed[1] in reference to a casual fancy in one

[1] See the letter of Lamb, Jan. 9th, 1823.—F.

of the letters of his fellow in clerkly as well as in poetical labours, Bernard Barton—a fancy as alien to the habitual thoughts of his friend, as to his own—for no one has pursued a steadier course on the weary way of duty than the poet whose brief dream of literary engrossment incited Lamb to make a generous amends to his ledger for all his unjust reproaches. The references to the booksellers have the colouring of fantastical exaggeration, by which he delighted to give effect to the immediate feeling; but making allowance for this mere play of fancy, how just is his advice—how wholesome for every youth who hesitates whether he shall abandon the certain reward of plodding industry for the splendid miseries of authorship![1]

[1] It is singular that, some years before, Mr. Barton had received similar advice from a very different poet—Lord Byron. As the letter has never been published, and it may be interesting to compare the expressions of the two men so different on the same subject, I subjoin it here:—

"To Bernard Barton, Esq.

"St. James's Street, June 1, 1812.

"Sir,—The most satisfactory answer to the concluding part of your letter is, that Mr. Murray will republish your volume, if you still retain your inclination for the experiment, which I trust will be successful. Some weeks ago my friend Mr. Rogers showed me some of the stanzas in MS., and I then expressed my opinion of their merit, which a further perusal of the printed volume has given me no reason to revoke. I mention this, as it may not be disagreeable to you to learn, that I entertained a very favourable opinion of your powers before I was aware that such sentiments were reciprocal. Waving your obliging expressions as to my own productions, for which I thank you very sincerely, and assure you that I think not lightly of the praise of one whose approbation is valuable; will you allow me to talk to you candidly, not critically, on the subject of yours? You will not suspect me of a wish to discourage, since I pointed out to the publisher the propriety of complying with your wishes. I think more highly of your poetical talents than it would perhaps gratify you to hear

In the beginning of the year 1823, his Essays, collected in a volume, under the title of "Elia," were published by Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, who had become the proprietors of the *London Magazine*. The book met with a rapid sale, while the magazine in which its contents had appeared, declined.

In the same year, Lamb appeared, for the first and only time of his life before the public, as an assailant: and the object of his attack was one of his oldest and fastest friends, Mr. Southey. It might, indeed, have been predicted of Lamb, if ever he *did* enter the arena of personal controversy, it would be with one who had obtained a place in his affection; for no motive less powerful than the resentment of friendship which

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expressed, for I believe, from what I observe of your mind, that you are above flattery. To come to the point, you deserve success; but we knew before Addison wrote his Cato, that desert does not always command it. But suppose it attained,

'You know what ills the author's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.'

Do not renounce writing, *but never trust entirely to authorship*. If you have a profession, retain it; it will be like Prior's fellowship, a last and sure resource. Compare Mr. Rogers with other authors of the day; assuredly he is among the first of living poets, but is it to that he owes his station in society, and his intimacy in the best circles?—no, it is to his prudence and respectability. The world (a bad one, I own) courts him because he has no occasion to court it. He is a poet, nor is he less so because he is something more. I am not sorry to hear that you were not tempted by the vicinity of Capel Lofft, Esq.,—though, if he had done for you what he has for the Bloomfields, I should never have laughed at his rage for patronising. But a truly well-constituted mind will ever be independent. That you may be so is my sincere wish; and if others think as well of your poetry as I do, you will have no cause to complain of your readers Believe me,

"Your obliged and obedient servant,
"BYRON."

deemed itself wounded, could place him in a situation so abhorrent to his habitual thoughts. Lamb had, up to this time, little reason to love reviews or reviewers; and the connection of Southey with *The Quarterly Review*, while he felt that it raised, and softened, and refined the tone of that powerful organ of a great party, sometimes vexed him for his friend. His indignation also had been enlisted on behalf of Hazlitt and Hunt, who had been attacked in this work in a manner which he regarded as unfair; for the critics had not been content with descanting on the peculiarities in the style and taste of the one, or reprobating the political or personal vehemence of the other, — which were fair subjects of controversy, — but spoke of them with a contempt which every man of letters had a right to resent, as unjust. He had been much annoyed by an allusion to himself in an article on "Hazlitt's Political Essays," which appeared in the *Review* for November, 1819, as "one whom we should wish to see in more respectable company;" for he felt a compliment paid him at the expense of a friend, as a grievance far beyond any direct attack on himself. He was also exceedingly hurt by a reference made in an article on Dr. Reid's work "On Nervous Affections," which appeared in July, 1822, to an essay which he had contributed some years before to a collection of tracts published by his friend, Mr. Basil Montague, on the effect of spirituous liquors, entitled "The Confessions of a Drunkard." The contribution of this paper is a striking proof of the prevalence of Lamb's personal regards over all selfish feelings and tastes; for no one was less disposed than he to Montague's theory or practice of abstinence; yet he was willing to gratify his friend by this terrible picture of the extreme effects

of intemperance, of which his own occasional deviations from the right line of sobriety had given him hints and glimpses. The reviewer of Dr. Reid, adverting to this essay, speaks of it as a "fearful picture of the consequences of intemperance, which WE happen to know is a true tale." How far it was from actual truth the "Essays of Elia," the production of a later day, in which the maturity of his feeling, humour, and reason is exhibited, may sufficiently witness. These articles were not written by Mr. Southey;[1] but they prepared Lamb to feel acutely any attack from the *Review;* and a paragraph in an article in the number for July, 1823, entitled "Progress of Infidelity," in which he recognised the hand of his old friend, gave poignancy to all the painful associations which had arisen from the same work, and concentrated them in one bitter feeling. After recording some of the confessions of unbelievers of the wretchedness which their infidelity brought on them, Mr. Southey thus proceeded:—

"Unbelievers have not always been honest enough thus to express their real feelings; but this we know concerning them, that when they had renounced their birthright of hope, they have not been able to divest themselves of fear. From the nature of the human mind, this might be presumed, and in fact it is so. They may deaden the heart and stupify the conscience, but they cannot destroy the imaginative faculty. There is a remarkable proof of this in 'Elia's Essays,' a book which wants only a sounder religious feeling, to be as delightful as it is original. In that upon

[1] Dyer in his notice of Talfourd's work, in the *Gentleman's Magazine,* says that the review was written by Dr. Gooch, of Berners Street.—F.

'Witches and the other Night Fears,' he says, 'It is not book, or picture, or the stories of foolish servants, which create these terrors in children; they can at most but give them a direction. Dear little T. H., who of all children has been brought up with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition, who was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, or scarcely to be told of bad men, or to hear or read of any distressing story, finds all this world of fear, from which he has been so rigidly excluded *ab extra*, in his own "thick-coming fancies," and from his little midnight pillow this nurse child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the well-damned murderer are tranquillity.'—This poor child, instead of being trained up in the way he should go, had been bred in the ways of modern philosophy; he had systematically been prevented from knowing anything of the Saviour who said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven;' care had been taken that he should not pray to God, nor lie down at night in reliance upon his good providence! Nor let it be supposed that terrors of imagination belong to childhood alone. The reprobate heart, which has discarded all love of God, cannot so easily rid itself of the fear of the devil; and even when it succeeds in that also, it will then create a hell for itself. We have heard of unbelievers who thought it probable that they should be awake in their graves; and this was the opinion for which they had exchanged a Christian's hope of immortality!"

The allusion in this paragraph was really, as Lamb was afterwards convinced, intended by Mr. Southey to assist the sale of the book. In haste, having ex-

punged some word which he thought improper,[1] he wrote, "*sounder* religious feeling," not satisfied with the epithet, but meaning to correct it in the proof, which unfortunately was never sent him.

Lamb saw it on his return from a month's pleasant holidays at Hastings, and expressed his first impression respecting it in a letter to his Quaker friend Barton. But his angry feeling was a little diverted by the execution of a scheme, rather suddenly adopted, of removing to a neat cottage at Islington, where Lamb first found himself installed in the dignity of a householder.[2] There an expostulation with Southey was

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[1] The "improper" word was *saner;* almost as awkward an allusion as Gifford's "poor maniac." Southey was horrified at what he had thus unconsciously written, and, as stated in the text, felt that any substitution would be more suitable, for the present at least. It must be said that the Essays are open to his very temperate criticism, as it cannot be denied that an under-current of amiable materialism runs through them. Here the "gentle-hearted" Charles was a little unreasonable; especially as he had allowed his friend and champion, Leigh Hunt, to make the same objection. "It is difficult," wrote the latter, in a number of the *Examiner*, in 1819, "from his works to collect whether Mr. Lamb is a *professed Christian or not*." This is far more severe than Southey's "sounder religious feeling," which he had intended to soften away. Lamb wrote that he did not intend to retort, but he later changed his mind. Southey treated the attack with a sweetness that did infinite credit to his goodnature and good humour. "The letter, I remember," says Mr. Procter, "produced a strong sensation in literary circles, and Mr. Southey's acquaintances smiled, and his enemies rejoiced, at him."—F.

[2] Mr. George Daniel, the well known "D. C." of "Cumberland's Theatre," gives the following sketch of their life at Islington:—"He planted, pruned, and grafted. The rose was his favourite flower. 'Commend me,' he said, 'to the sparrows for what our friend Matnews calls in his "At Home," "irregular appropriation."' Seeing his growing fondness for birds, I offered him a beautiful bullfinch ensconced in a handsome cage. But he declined the present. 'Every

written, and appeared in the *London Magazine* for October, 1823. Lamb did not print it in any subse-

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song that is sung from its wiry prison,' said he, 'I could never flatter myself was meant for my ear; but rather a wistful note to the passing travellers of air that it were with them too! This would make me self-reproachful and sad. Yet I should be loth to let the little captive fly, lest, being unused to liberty, it should flutter itself to death, or starve.'

"And with what cheerfulness and gratitude he boasted that, for the first time in his life, he was the absolute lord and master of a whole house!—of an undisturbed and well-conducted home! I helped him to arrange his darling folios (Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, and Company!) in his pleasant dining-room; to hang in the best light his portraits of the poets, and his 'Hogarths' (the latter in old-fashioned ebony frames), in his newly-furnished drawing-room; and to adorn the mantelpieces with his Chelsea china shepherds and shepherdesses (family relics) which, like their owner, looked gayer and fresher for the change of air! He lived abstemiously, retired to rest at a reasonable hour (the midnight chimes had hitherto been more familiar to him than the lark's), and rose early. He took long summer walks in the neighbouring fields, and returned with a gathering of wild flowers. 'Every glimpse of beauty,' he said, 'was acceptable and precious to colour our pale lives.' He lamented the encroachments of 'horrid bricks and mortar' on the green sward.

"'Merrie Islington' was endeared to Charles Lamb by many tender recollections. Its rural walks, having been the scenes of his early and transient courtship, still retained for him an inexpressible charm. I have had many opportunities of friendly converse with the gifted woman, his sister, when her intellect was unclouded, and I have beheld her when that intellect was a ruin, and memory was alive only to the horrors of the past. Lamb, referring to his many domestic trials, once remarked to me, 'What a hard heart must mine be that these blows cannot break it!' Yet he might have remembered that when the darkness is deepest (midnight), the light is near.

"In the autumn of 1823, after dining at Colebrooke Cottage with him and Robert Bloomfield, I accompanied the two poets to the celebrated 'Queen Elizabeth's Walk' at Stoke Newington, which had become Lamb's favourite promenade in summer, for its wild flowers, upon which he could never tread with indifference; for its seclusion

quent collection of his essays; but I have reason to know that its publication will cause no painful feel-

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and its shade. He would watch the setting sun from the top of old Canonbury Tower, and sit contemplating the starry heavens (for he was a disciple of Plato, the great Apostle of the Beautiful!), until the cold night air warned him to retire. He was hand and glove with Goodman Symes, the then tenant of this venerable Tower, and a brother antiquary in a small way, who took pleasure in entertaining him in the oak-panelled chamber where Goldsmith wrote his 'Traveller,' and supped on butter-milk; pointing at the same time to a small coloured portrait of Shakespeare in a curiously carved gilt frame, which Lamb would look at lovingly, and which, through the kindness of a late friend, has since become mine. He was never weary of toiling up and down the steep, winding, narrow stairs of this suburban pile, and peeping into its sly corners and cupboards, as if he expected to discover there some hitherto hidden clue to its mysterious origin! The ancient hostelries of Islington and its vicinity he also visited. At the Old Queen's Head he puffed his pipe, and quaffed his ale out of the huge tankard. It was here that he chanced to fall in with that obese and burly figure of fun, Theodore Hook, who came to take a last look at this historical relic before it was pulled down. Hook accompanied him to Colebrook Cottage, which was hard by. During the evening Lamb (lightsome and lissom) proposed a race round the garden; but Hook (a *cochon à l'angraisse*, pursy and puffy, with a nose as radiant as the red-hot poker in a pantomime, and whose gait was like the hobblings of a fat goose attempting to fly) declined the contest, remarking that he could outrun nobody but 'the constable.' In the Sir Hugh Myddleton's Head 'Elia' would often introduce his own, for there he would be sure to find, from its proximity to Sadler's Wells, some play-going old crony with whom he could exchange a convivial 'crack,' and hear the celebrated Joe Grimaldi call for his 'namesake' (a tumbler!) of '*sweet and pretty*' (rum punch); challenging Boniface to bring it to a 'rummer!' Many a gleeful hour has he spent in this once rural hostelrie (since razed and rebuilt) in fumigation and fun. Though now a retired 'country gentleman,' luxuriating in the Persian's Paradise, 'something to see, and nothing to do,' he occasionally enjoyed the amusements of the town. He had always been a great sight-seer (as early as 1802 he piloted the Wordsworths through Bartlemy Fair), and the ruling passion still followed him to his Islingtonian

ings in the mind of Mr. Southey, and as it forms the only ripple on the kindliness of Lamb's personal and literary life. Indeed, the feeling with which it was received by him may be best described in his own words in a letter to Mr. Moxon. "On my part there was not even a momentary feeling of anger; I was very much surprised and grieved, because I knew how much he would condemn himself. And yet no resentful letter was ever written less offensively: his gentle nature may be seen in it throughout."[1] Southey was right in his belief in the revulsion Lamb's feelings would undergo, when the excitement under which he had written subsided; for although he would retract

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Tusculum. 'One who patronises,' said he, 'as I do, St. Bartlemy, must have a kindred inkling for my Lord Mayor's Show. They both possess the charm of antiquity.' Many a penny he has paid for a peep into a puppet-show, and after his final retirement to Edmonton in the Spring of 1833, he, in my company, revisited its fair in the September following, and renewed old acquaintanceship with the clowns and conjurors.

"This happy change of life and scene, this moral sunshine—(he had vanquished evil by resisting it)—produced the best effects upon his constitution (sickly frames are the homes of sickly fancies) and mind. Those spectre-haunted day and night dreams, (ghastly and grotesque!) that he so fearfully describes, no longer distracted him, and he lost that nervous irritability and restlessness which at one time threatened to become a permanent disease. His eyes recovered their lustre, his step its firmness, his pulse its regularity, and his appetite its tone. 'I have the stomach,' said he, 'of a Heliogabalus and the gorge of a garreteer!' He had not become a 'sadder'—for he was as full of felicitous absurdities as ever—but a 'wiser' man. All rejoiced at his rejuvenescence."—F.

[1] He also added: "My reply was to this effect, that if he had intimated to me that he was hurt by anything which had been said by me in the *Quarterly Review*, I would in the next number have explained or qualified it to his entire satisfaction; but I would never make sport for the Philistines by entering into a controversy with him."—F.

nothing he had ever said or written in defence of his friends, he was ready at once to surrender every resentment of his own. Southey came to London in the following month, and wrote proposing to call at Islington; and on the 21st of November Lamb thus replied:—

"E. I. H., 21st November, 1823.

"Dear Southey,—The kindness of your note has melted away the mist which was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. That accursed Q. R. had vexed me by a gratuitous speaking, of its own knowledge, that the 'Confessions of a D——d' was a genuine description of the state of the writer. Little things that are not ill meant, may produce much ill. *That* might have injured me alive and dead. I am in a public office, and my life is insured. I was prepared for anger, and I thought I saw, in a few obnoxious words, a hard case of repetition directed against me. I wish both magazine and review at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) will be still more so; for the folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at that time. "C. L."

Southey went to Colebrook-cottage, as proposed; the awkwardness of meeting went off in a moment; and the affectionate intimacy, which had lasted for almost twenty years, was renewed, to be interrupted only by death.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1823-1833.]

New Friends.—Lamb's Emancipation.—Enfield.—Edmonton.

Lamb was fond of visiting the Universities in the summer vacation, and repeatedly spent his holiday month at Cambridge with his sister. On one of these occasions they met with a little girl, who being in a manner alone in the world, engaged their sympathy, and soon riveted their affections. Emma Isola was the daughter of Mr. Charles Isola, who had been one of the esquire bedells of the University: her grandfather, Agostino Isola, had been compelled to fly from Milan, because a friend took up an English book in his apartment, which he had carelessly left in view.[1] This good old man numbered among his pupils, Gray the poet, Mr. Pitt, and, in his old age, Wordsworth, whom he instructed in the Italian language. His little grand-daughter, at the time when she had the

[1] He belonged to Emmanuel College, where he had taken a degree; and in a contest for the office of "Esquire Bedell," that took place in 1797, he was elected in preference to a very influential opponent, Mr. Ellis, Fellow of King's College. His father was highly esteemed, and in consequence there was a general desire to do something to advance the son. The latter was of shy and retiring manners, and for the sixteen years that he held his office, "was found ready to undertake every duty that did not include dining with a large party."—*Reminiscences of Cambridge*.—F.

good fortune to win the regard of Mr. Lamb, had lost both her parents, and was spending her holidays with an aunt, who lived with a sister of Mr. Ayrton, at whose house Lamb generally played his evening rubber during his stay at Cambridge. The liking which both Lamb and his sister took for the little orphan, led to their begging her of her aunt for the next holidays; their regard for her increased; she regularly spent the holidays with them till she left school, and afterwards was adopted as a daughter, and lived generally with them until 1833, when she married Mr. Moxon. Lamb was fond of taking long walks in the country, and as Miss Lamb's strength was not always equal to these pedestrian excursions, she became his constant companion in walks which even extended "to the green fields of pleasant Hertfordshire."

About this time, Lamb added to his list of friends, Mr. Hood, the delightful humorist;[1] Hone, lifted for

[1] An American lady, Mrs. Balmanno, describes a dinner at the Hoods, then living at Winchmore. Miss Kelly was of the party. Lamb, the lady noted, was "always playing pranks on his sister, who was dressed with quaker-like simplicity in a dove-coloured silk, with a transparent kerchief of snow-white muslin folded across her bosom." Her behaviour towards him was as of "some adoring disciple," her eyes being always fixed on his face: even when he was talking at the other end of the room, she would supply some word that he wanted. On this occasion he was in high spirits, sauntering about the room, his hands crossed behind his back, conversing in fits and starts, and all attention to Miss Kelly. Affecting to seek a dish that would be easy to carve, "so as to take the trouble off Mrs. Hood's hands," he selected a lobster salad, observing that that was the thing. When pressed to sing a song, he made a Latin speech, which was in favour, he said, of Mrs. Hood, but really in praise of the Salad.—*Memorials of T. Hood.*

Mr. Procter quotes the American N. P. Willis' account of his meeting with Charles and Mary Lamb:—"He had been invited by a gentle-

a short time into political fame by the prosecution of his Parodies, and the signal energy and success of his defence, but now striving by unwearied researches, which were guided by a pure taste and an honest heart, to support a numerous family; and Ainsworth, then a youth, who has since acquired so splendid a reputation as the author of "Rookwood" and "Crichton." Mr. Ainsworth, then resident at Man-

man in the Temple, Mr. R—— (Robinson?) to meet Charles Lamb and his sister at breakfast. The Lambs lived at that time 'a little way out of London, and were not quite punctual.' At last, they enter; 'the gentleman in black small-clothes and gaiters, short and very slight in person; his head set on his shoulders with a thoughtful forward bent, his hair just sprinkled with grey, a beautiful deep set eye, an aquiline nose, and a very indescribable mouth. Whether it expressed most humour or feeling, goodnature or a kind of whimsical peevishness, or twenty other things which passed over it by turns, I cannot in the least be certain.' The guest places a large arm chair for Mary Lamb; Charles pulls it away, saying, gravely, 'Mary, don't take it; it looks as if you were going to have a tooth drawn.' Miss Lamb was at that time very hard of hearing, and Charles took advantage of her temporary deafness to impute various improbabilities to her, which however were so obvious as to render any denial or explanation unnecessary. Willis told Charles that he had bought a copy of the 'Elia' in America, in order to give to a friend. 'What did you give for it?' asked Lamb. 'About seven and sixpence.' 'Permit me to pay you that,' said Lamb, counting out the money with earnestness on the table; 'I never yet wrote anything that could sell. I am the publisher's ruin. My last poem won't sell,—not a copy. Have you seen it.' No; Willis had not. 'It's only eighteen-pence, and I'll give you sixpence toward it,' said Lamb; and he described where Willis would find it, 'sticking up in a shop window in the Strand.' Lamb ate nothing; but inquired anxiously for some potted fish, which Mr. R—— used to procure for him. There was none in the house; he therefore asked to see the cover of the pot which had contained it; he thought it would do him good. It was brought, and on it was a picture of the fish. Lamb kissed it, and then left the table and began to wander about the room, with an uncertain step."—F.

chester, excited by an enthusiastic admiration of Elia, had sent him some books.

In the year 1824, one of Lamb's last ties to the theatre, as a scene of present enjoyment, was severed. Munden, the rich peculiarities of whose acting he has embalmed in one of the choicest "Essays of Elia," quitted the stage in the mellowness of his powers. His relish for Munden's acting was almost a new sense; he did not compare him with the old comedians, as having common qualities with them, but regarded him as altogether of a different and original style. On the last night of his appearance, Lamb was very desirous to attend, but every place in the boxes had long since been secured, and Lamb was not strong enough to stand the tremendous rush, by enduring which, alone, he could hope to obtain a place in the pit; when Munden's gratitude for his exquisite praise anticipated his wish, by providing for him and Miss Lamb places in a corner of the orchestra, close to the stage. The play of the "Poor Gentleman," in which Munden played Sir Robert Bramble, had concluded, and the audience were impatiently waiting for the farce, in which the great comedian was to delight them for the last time, when my attention was suddenly called to Lamb by Miss Kelly, who sat with my party far withdrawn into the obscurity of one of the upper boxes, but overlooking the radiant hollow which waved below us, to our friend. In his hand, directly beneath the line of stage-lights, glistened a hugh porter-pot, which he was draining; while the broad face of old Munden was seen thrust out from the door by which the musicians enter, watching the close of the draught, when he might receive and hide the porten-

tous beaker from the gaze of the admiring neighbours. Some unknown benefactor had sent four pots of stout to keep up the veteran's heart during his last trial; and, not able to drink them all, he bethought him of Lamb, and without considering the wonder which would be excited in the brilliant crowd who surrounded him, conveyed himself the cordial chalice to Lamb's parched lips. At the end of the same farce, Munden found himself unable to deliver from memory a short and elegant address which one of his sons had written for him; but, provided against accidents, took it from his pocket, wiped his eyes, put on his spectacles, read it, and made his last bow. This was, perhaps, the last night when Lamb took a hearty interest in the present business scene; for though he went now and then to the theatre to gratify Miss Isola, or to please an author who was his friend, his real stage henceforth only spread itself out in the selectest chambers of his memory.[1]

A New Series of the *London Magazine* was commenced with the year 1825, in an increased size and price; but the spirit of the work had evaporated, as often happens to periodical works, as the store of rich fancies with which its contributors had begun, was in a measure exhausted. Lamb contributed another theatrical paper, a "Memoir of Liston," who occasionally enlivened Lamb's evening parties with his society; and who, besides the interest which he derived from his theatrical fame, was recommended to Lamb by the cordial admiration he expressed for Munden, whom he used to imitate in a style delight-

[1] "It was on this occasion," says Mrs. Cowden Clarke "that Mary Lamb made the pun, 'Sic transit gloria Munden.'". F

fully blending his own humour with that of his sometime rival. The "Memoir" is altogether a fiction, giving a ludicrously improbable account of his hero's pedigree, birth, and early habits.

This year is marked by one of the principal events in Lamb's uneventful life; his retirement from the drudgery of the desk, with a pension equal to two-thirds of his now liberal salary.[1] Freedom now gleamed upon him, and he became restless with the approach of deliverance. In February, 1825, he had completed his half century.

The first dawning hope of Lamb's emancipation was suggested in a note to Manning, proposing a visit, in which he refers to a certificate of non-capacity for hard desk-work, given by a medical friend (Dr. Tuthill). "I dare not hope," he says, "for fear of disappointment." The dream was realized—in April, 1825, the "world-wearied clerk" went home for ever—with what delight has been told in the elaborate raptures of his "Superannuated Man," and in the letters already published,[2] as well as how imperfectly the emancipation, so rapturously hailed, fulfilled its promises.

When the first enjoyment of freedom was over, it may be doubted whether Lamb was happier for the change. He lost a grievance on which he could

[1] He was treated with liberality, his retiring pension being fixed at £450; nine pounds being deducted to secure a provision for his sister —F.

[2] Some of his friends were already doubtful as to the result. Mr. C. Robinson wrote thus to Miss Wordsworth in June:—"Nor can I give you the report you so naturally looked for of his conduct at so great a change in his life. I do not doubt, I do not fear, that he will be unable to sustain the weight of chance desires. He has no desire to travel, . . . he has a passion for solitude, and hitherto finds that his retiring has not brought him leisure."—F.

lavish all the fantastical exaggeration of a sufferer without wounding the feelings of any individual, and perhaps the loss was scarcely compensated by the listless leisure which it brought him. Whenever the facile kindness of his disposition permitted, he fled from those temptations of society, which he could only avoid by flight; and his evening hours of solitude were hardly so sweet as when they were the reliefs and resting-places of his mind,—"glimpses which might make him less forlorn" of the world of poetry and romance. His mornings were chiefly occupied in long walks, sometimes extending to ten or twelve miles, in which at this time he was accompanied by a noble dog, the property of Mr. Hood, to whose humours Lamb became almost a slave,[1] and who, at last, acquired so portentous an ascendancy that Lamb

[1] The following allusion to Lamb's subservience to Dash is extracted from one of a series of papers, written in a most cordial spirit, and with great characteristic power, by the friend to whom Dash was assigned, which appeared in the *Court Magazine*. "During these interminable rambles—heretofore pleasant in virtue of their profound loneliness and freedom from restraint, Lamb made himself a perfect slave to the dog—whose habits were of the most extravagantly errant nature, for, generally speaking, the creature was half a mile off from his companion either before or behind, scouring the fields or roads in all directions, scampering up or down 'all manner of streets,' and leaving Lamb in a perfect fever of irritation and annoyance; for he was afraid of losing the dog when it was out of sight, and yet could not persuade himself to keep it *in* sight for a moment, by curbing its roving spirit. Dash knew Lamb's weakness in these particulars as well as he did himself, and took a dog-like advantage of it. In the Regent's Park, in particular, Dash had his master completely at his mercy; for the moment they got into the ring, he used to get through the paling on to the green sward, and disappear for a quarter or half an hour together, knowing perfectly well that Lamb did not dare move from the spot where he (Dash) had disappeared, till such time as he thought proper to show himself again. And they used to take this particular

requested his friend Mr. Patmore to take him under his care. At length the desire of assisting Mr. Hone, in his struggle to support his family by antiquarian research and modern pleasantry, renewed to him the blessing of regular labour; he began the task of reading through the glorious heap of dramas collected at the British Museum under the title of the "Garrick Plays," to glean scenes of interest and beauty for the work of his friend; and the work of kindness brought with it its own reward. "It is a sort of office work to me," says Lamb, in a letter to Barton; "hours ten to four, the same. It does me good. Man must have regular occupation that has been used to it."

But he now found that the cares of housekeeping pressed too heavily on Mary Lamb, and presently resolved to resign the dignity of a housekeeper for the independence of a lodger.[1] A couple of old dwellers in Enfield, hard by his cottage, had the good fortune to receive them. The first result of the experiment was happy, as it brought improved health to Mary Lamb; and in his letters addressed to Wordsworth, and to Gilman (intended also for his great guest, Coleridge), he described his landlord and landlady; expressing, also, with a fine solemnity, the feelings which still held him to Enfield.

While Lamb was residing at Enfield, the friendship which, in 1824, he had formed with Mr. Moxon, led to very frequent intercourse, destined, in after years,

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walk much oftener than they otherwise would, precisely because Dash liked it and Lamb did not." Under his second master, we learn from the same source, that Dash "subsided into the best bred and best behaved of his species."

[1] This "pressing too heavily," was, of course, connected with their usual affliction.—F.

to be rendered habitual, by the marriage of his friend with the young lady whom he regarded almost as a daughter. In 1828 Mr. Moxon, at the request of Mr. Hurst, of the firm of Hurst, Chance, and Co., applied to Lamb to supply an article for the "Keepsake," which he, always disliking the flimsy elegancies of the Annuals—sadly opposed to his own exclusive taste for old, standard, moth-eaten books—had declined.

In the spring of the year, Mr. Murray, the eminent publisher, through one of Lamb's oldest and most cherished friends, Mr. Ayrton, proposed to him another literary venture: that he should undertake a continuation of his specimens of the Old English Dramatists. The proposal was communicated by Mr. Ayrton to Lamb, then at Enfield, and then too painfully anxious for the recovery of Miss Isola, who was dangerously ill in Suffolk, to make the arrangement desired. His friend's letter he said, "revived some old images; Phillips,[1] (not the Colonel,) with his few hairs bristling at the charge of a revoke, which he declares impossible; the old Captain's significant nod over the right shoulder,[2] (was it not?)."

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[1] Edward Phillips, Esq., Secretary to the Speaker of the House of Commons. The "Colonel" alluded to was the Lieutenant of Marines who accompanied Capt. Cook in his last voyage, and was on shore with that great man when he fell a victim to his humanity. On the death of his commander, Lieutenant Phillips, himself wounded, swam off to the boats; but seeing one of his marines struggling in the water to escape the natives who were pursuing him, gallantly swam back, protected his man at the peril of his own life, and both reached their boat in safety. He afterwards married that accomplished and amiable daughter of Dr. Burney, whose name so frequently occurs in the Diary and Correspondence of her sister, Madame D'Arblay.

[2] Admiral Burney died in 1821, having been promoted to his rank only a few weeks before.—F.

"Have you seen," he wrote at this time, "a curious letter in the *Morning Chronicle*, by C. L.,[1] the genius of absurdity?"

He continued occasional contributions to the *New Monthly*, especially the series of "Popular Fallacies;" wrote short articles in the *Athenæum;* and a great many acrostics on the names of his friends. He had now a neighbour in Mr. Serjeant Wilde, to whom he was introduced by Mr. Burney, and whom he held in high esteem, though Lamb cared nothing for forensic eloquence, and thought very little of eloquence of any kind; which, it must be confessed, when printed is the most vapid of all reading. What political interest could not excite, personal regard produced in favour of his new friend; and Lamb supplied several versified squibs and snatches of electioneering songs to grace Wilde's contests at Newark. With these slender avocations his life was dull, and only a sense of duty induced him to persist in absence from London.

The following was addressed in 1829 to the Editor, on occasion of his giving to a child the name of "Charles Lamb," though withheld from an indisposition to intrude matters so personal to himself on the

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[1] Capel Lofft, a barrister residing in Suffolk, a well-known whig and friend of Major Wyvil and Major Cartwright, who sometimes half vexed Lamb by signing, as he had a right, their common initials to a sonnet. He wrote a very vehement letter, contending that the detention of Napoleon on board a vessel off the coast, preparatory to his being sent to St. Helena, was illegal, and that the captain of the vessel would be compelled to surrender him in obedience to a writ of Habeas Corpus.—T. As this gentleman signed with the same initials, Lamb was often to his annoyance, set down as the author of his compositions. The Hon. George Lamb, another dilettante writer, was given in a theatrical dictionary as the author of "Mr. H."—F.

reader, may now, on his drawing near the close of the subject, find its place.

"To Mr. Talfourd.

"Dear Talfourd,—You could not have told me of a more friendly thing than you have been doing. I am proud of my namesake. I shall take care never to do any dirty action, pick pockets, or anyhow get myself hanged, for fear of reflecting ignominy upon your young Chrisom. I have now a motive to be good. I shall not *omnis moriar*;—my name borne down the black gulf of oblivion.

"I shall survive in eleven letters, five more than Cæsar. Possibly I shall come to be knighted, or more! Sir C. L. Talfourd, Bart.!"

* * * * *

It was signed,—"Charles Lamb-Philo-Talfourd."

He adds: "I come as near it as I can."[1]

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[1] The child who bore the name so honoured by his parents, survived his god-father only a year—dying at Brighton, whither he had been taken in the vain hope of restoration, on the 3rd December, 1835. Will the reader forgive the weakness which prompts the desire, in this place, to link their memories together, by inserting a few verses, which, having been only published at the end of the last small edition of the Editor's dramas, may have missed some of the friendly eyes for which they were written?

Our gentle Charles has pass'd away
From earth's short bondage free,
And left to us its leaden day
And mist-enshrouded sea.

Here, by the ocean's terraced side,
Sweet hours of hope were known,
When first the triumph of its tide
Seem'd omen of our own.

That eager joy the sea-breeze gave,
When first it raised his hair,

Good tidings soon reached Lamb of Miss Isola's health, and he went to Fornham to bring her, for a

Sunk with each day's retiring wave,
Beyond the reach of prayer.

The sun-blink that through drizzling mist,
To flickering hope akin,
Lone waves with feeble fondness kiss'd,
No smile as faint can win;

Yet not in vain with radiance weak
The heavenly stranger gleams—
Not of the world it lights to speak,
But that from whence it streams.

That world our patient sufferer sought,
Serene with pitying eyes,
As if his mounting spirit caught
The wisdom of the skies.

With boundless love it look'd abroad
For one bright moment given,
Shone with a loveliness that awed,
And quiver'd into Heaven.

A year made slow by care and toil
Has paced its weary round,
Since Death enrich'd with kindred spoil
The snow-clad, frost-ribb'd ground.

Then Lamb, with whose endearing name
Our boy we proudly graced,
Shrank from the warmth of sweeter fame
Than ever bard embraced.

Still 'twas a mournful joy to think
Our darling might supply,
For years to us, a living link
With name that cannot die.

And though such fancy gleam no more
On earthly sorrow's night,
Truth's nobler torch unveils the shore
Which lends to both its light.

month's visit, to Enfield.[1] In the following year he ventured to try the experiment of lodging a little while in London; but Miss Lamb's malady compelled him to return to the solitude of Enfield.[2] He therefore gave up Colebrooke Cottage, and took what he described in a notelet to me as "an old-looking gambogish-coloured house," at Chase Side, Enfield. The situation was far from picturesque, for the opposite side of the road only presented some middling tenements, two Dissenting-chapels, and a public-house decorated with a swinging sign of a Rising Sun; but the neighbouring field-walks were pleasant, and the country, as he liked to say, quite as good as Westmoreland.[3]

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[1] It was on his return that Lamb's repartee to the query of the statistical gentleman as to the prospects of the turnip crop, which had been repeatedly published, was made.

[2] Mrs. Leishman was his landlady, though he boarded with the family that lived next door. Even in their housekeeping, brother and sister seem to have been most unfortunate. The loss of their maid "Becky," who seems to have directed the household with a good-natured tyranny, led to the boarding arrangement, which again turned out unsatisfactory; their caterers, according to Mr. Patmore, "charging them for the plainest possible accommodation a price almost sufficient to keep all the household twice over." One of the "extra teas" was subjected to an "extra" charge, because "the elderly gentleman" (Wordsworth) "had taken such a quantity of sugar in his tea."—F.

[3] Mr. T. Westwood, who was living at Enfield during these last days, recalls Lamb's kindness to him: describing their rambles in the lanes; "turning into more than one way-side hotel," where "for each host and hostess he had his joke, and was clearly an honoured presence. Later in the evening, when the lamp was lit, I ventured to slip into his hand that worst of all literary scarecrows, a volume of my juvenile verse. With his customary kindness and patience, he deciphered the weary pages, bantered me occasionally on the misanthropic and other despairing moods, and selected for commendation such as were simplest and sincerest. In the latter contingency Mary Lamb was usually called

The esteem which Lamb had always cherished for Mr. Rogers, was quickened into a livelier feeling by the generous interest which the poet took in the success of Mr. Moxon, who was starting as a publisher, and had established a magazine entitled *The Englishman*. This, although enriched with Lamb's articles, and some others of great merit, did not meet with a success so rapid as to requite the proprietor for the labour and anxiety of its production. One of his little notes to Mr. Moxon, on some long forgotten occasion of momentary displeasure, the nature and object of which is uncertain,—contains a fantastical exaggeration of anger, which, judged by those who knew the writer, only illustrates the entire absence of all the bad passions of hatred and contempt it feigns.

In 1830, a small volume of poems, the gleanings of some years, during which Lamb had devoted himself to prose, under his name of "Elia," was published by Mr. Moxon, under the title of "Album Verses," and which Lamb, in token of his strong regard, dedicated to the publisher. An unfavourable review of them in the *Literary Gazette* produced some verses from Southey, which were inserted in the *Times*, and of which the following, as evincing his unchanged friendship, may not unfitly be inserted here. The residue, being more severe on Lamb's critics than

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on for confirmation." He also mentions some little characteristic traits, such as his mode of disposing of new books, for which he cared but little. "One would come skimming to my feet through the branches of the apple-trees (our gardens were contiguous), or a "Bernard Barton" would be rolled downstairs after me from the library door. "Marcian Colonna" I remember finding on my window sill! "The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies" I picked up out of the strawberry-bed.

Lamb himself would have wished, may now be spared.

> "Charles Lamb, to those who know thee justly dear
> For rarest genius, and for sterling worth,
> Unchanging friendship, warmth of heart sincere,
> And wit that never gave an ill thought birth,
> Nor ever in its sport infix'd a sting;
> To us who have admired and loved thee long,
> It is a proud as well as pleasant thing
> To hear thy good report, now borne along
> Upon the honest breath of public praise:
> We know that with the elder sons of song,
> In honouring whom thou hast delighted still,
> Thy name shall keep its course to after days."

This year closed upon the grave of Hazlitt. Lamb visited him frequently during his last illness, and attended his funeral. They had taken great delight in each other's conversation for many years; and though the indifference of Lamb to the objects of Hazlitt's passionate love or hatred, as a politician, at one time produced a coolness, the warmth of the defence of Hazlitt in "Elia's Letter to Southey" renewed the old regard of the philosopher, and set all to rights. Hazlitt, in his turn, as an Edinburgh Reviewer, had opportunities which he delighted to use, of alluding to Lamb's Specimens and Essays, and making him amends for the severity of ancient criticism, which the editor, who could well afford the genial inconsistency, was too generous to exclude. The conduct, indeed, of that distinguished person to Hazlitt, especially in his last illness, won Lamb's admiration, and wholly effaced the recollection of the time when, thirty years before, his play had been denied critical mercy under his rule. Hazlitt's death did not so much shock Lamb at the time, as it weighed down

his spirits afterwards, when he felt the want of those essays which he had used periodically to look for with eagerness in the magazines and reviews which they alone made tolerable to him; and when he realized the dismal certainty that he should never again enjoy that rich discourse of old poets and painters with which so many a long winter's night had been gladdened, or taste life with an additional relish in the keen sense of enjoyment which endeared it to his companion.

After the year 1830, Lamb's verses and essays were chiefly given to his friends; the former consisting of album contributions, the latter of little essences of observation and criticism. At this time, his old and excellent friend, Dyer, was much annoyed by some of his witticisms,—which, in truth, were only Lamb's modes of expressing his deep-seated regard; and at the quotation of a couplet in one of his early poems, which he had suppressed as liable to be misconstrued by Mr. Rogers. Mr. Barker had unfortunately met with the unexpurgated edition which contained this dubious couplet, and in his "Memorials of Dr. Parr" quoted the passage; which, to Mr. Dyer's delicate feelings,[1] conveyed the apprehension that Mr. Rogers

[1] Mr. Dyer had complained to Mr. Lamb of some suggestions in Elia, which annoyed him, not so much for his own sake as for the sake of others, who, in the delicacy of his apprehensiveness, he thought might feel aggrieved by imputations which were certainly not intended, and which they did not deserve. One passage in Elia, hinting that he had been hardly dealt with by schoolmasters, under whom he had been a teacher in his younger days, hurt him; as, in fact, he was treated by them with the most considerate generosity and kindness. Another passage which he regarded as implying that he had been underpaid by booksellers also vexed him; as his labours have always been highly esteemed, and have, according to the rate of remuneration of learned

would treat the suppression as colourable, and refer the revival of the lines to his sanction. The following letter was written to dispel those fears from his mind.

Coleridge, now in declining health, seems to have feared, from a long intermission of Lamb's visits to Highgate, that there was some estrangement between them, and to have written to Lamb under that fear. The answer shows how much he was mistaken.

"My dear Coleridge," Lamb wrote, "not an unkind thought has passed in my brain about you. But I have been wofully neglectful of you, so that I do not deserve to announce to you, that if I do not hear from you before then, I will set out on Wednesday morning to take you by the hand. I would do it this moment, but an unexpected visit might flurry you. I shall take silence for acquiescence; and come. I am glad you could write so long a letter. Old loves to, and hope of kind looks from, the Gilmans when I come.—Yours, *semper idem*, C. L."

"If you ever thought an offence, much more wrote it, against me, it must have been in the times of Noah, and the great waters swept it away. Mary's most kind love, and maybe a wrong prophet of your bodings!—here she is crying for mere love over your letter. I wring out less, but not sincerer showers."

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men, been well compensated by Mr. Valpy and others. The truth is that Lamb wrote from a vague recollection, without intending any personal reference at all to Mr. Dyer himself, and only seeking to illustrate the pure, simple, and elevated character of a man of letters "unspotted from the world." Probably no one has ever applied these suggestions to the parties for whose reputation Mr. Dyer has been so honourably anxious but himself; but it is due to his feelings to state that they are founded in error.

In the spring of 1833, Lamb made his last removal from Enfield to Edmonton. He was about to lose the society of Miss Isola, on the eve of marriage, and determined to live altogether with his sister, whether in her sanity or her madness. On the approach of the wedding-day, fixed for the 30th July, Lamb turned to the account of a half-tearful merriment, the gift of a watch to the young lady whom he was about to lose.

To Mr. Moxon.

"July 24th, 1833.

"For God's sake give Emma no more watches; *one* has turned her head. She is arrogant and insulting. She said something very unpleasant to our old clock in the passage, as if he did not keep time, and yet he had made her no appointment. She takes it out every moment to look at the moment-hand."

Miss Lamb was in the sad state of mental estrangement up to the day of the wedding; but then in the constant companionship of her brother at Edmonton.[1] A cluster of little letters to the new married pair—the first from Charles, introducing one from Mary—shows the happy effect of the news on her mental health.

To Mr. and Mrs. Moxon.

"August, 1833.

"Dear Mr. and Mrs. Moxon,—Time very short. I

[1] His letters at this date are almost full of despair. To one he wrote that her state of mind was "deplorable beyond example." And to Wordsworth, in the following hopeless strain: "Mary is ill again; her illnesses encroach yearly. The last was three months, followed by two of depression most dreadful. I look back on the earlier attacks with longing; *nice little durations of six weeks or so, followed by complete restoration—shocking as they were then to me.*" Indeed from the date of their going to Edmonton the malady seems to have settled on her; to which it seems not unlikely that the solitude of the place contributed.—F.

wrote to Miss Fryer, and had the sweetest letter about you, Emma, that ever friendship dictated. 'I am full of good wishes, I am crying with good wishes,' she says; but you shall see it.

"Dear Moxon,—I take your writing most kindly, and shall most kindly your writing from Paris.

"I want to crowd another letter to Miss Fryer into the little time after dinner, before post-time. So with twenty thousand congratulations, Yours, C. L.

"I am, calm, sober, happy. Turn over for the reason. I got home from Dover Street, by Evans, *half as sober as a judge*. I am turning over a new leaf, as I hope you will now."

The turn of the leaf presented Miss Lamb's letter; and at the foot is the following by Charles:—

"Wednesday.

"Dears, again,—Your letter interrupted a seventh game at picquet which *we* were having, after walking to Wright's and purchasing shoes. We passed our time in cards, walks, and reading. We attack Tasso soon. C. L.

"Never was such a calm, or such a recovery. 'Tis her own words, undictated."

In this year the choicest essays, which Lamb had written since the publication of Elia, were collected and published—as with a melancholy foreboding—under the title of "The Last Essays of Elia;" by Mr. Moxon. The work contains ample proof that the powers of the author had ripened rather than declined; for the paper called "Blakesmoor in H—shire," which embodies his recollection of the old mansion in which his grandmother lived as housekeeper; those on Elliston. "Captain Jackson,"

Dawson Ph. Sc

Charles Lamb

and "The Old Margate Hoy," are among the most original, the least constrained, and the most richly coloured of his works. It was favourably noticed by almost all the principal critics—by many enthusiastically and sincerely praised—and an admirable notice in *The Quarterly* was published just after the foreboding of the title was fulfilled. His indisposition to write, however, increased; but in creating so much, excellent in kind, so complete in itself, and so little tinged with alloy, he had, in truth, done enough, and had earned in literature, as in the drudgery of the desk, a right to repose. Yet, still ready to obey the call of friendship, he wrote both prologue and epilogue to Knowles's play of "The Wife;" the composition of which must have been mere labour, as they are only decently suited to the occasion, and have no mark or likelihood to repay the vanity of the poet.

Miss Isola's marriage, which left Lamb and his sister once more alone, induced them to draw a little nearer to their friends; and they had fixed their abode in Church Street, within reach of the Enfield walks which custom had endeared to them.[1] There with his sister he continued, regularly visiting London and dining with Mr. Cary on every third Wednesday. Lamb and his sister were now, for the last year of their united lives, always together.

He had now to sustain the severest of his losses. After a long and painful illness—borne with an heroic patience which concealed the intensity of his sufferings from the bystanders, Coleridge died. As in the instance of Hazlitt, Lamb did not feel the immediate blow so acutely as he himself expected; but the

[1] The name of his landlady was Mrs Walden.—F.

calamity sank deep into his mind, and was, I believe, seldom far from his thoughts. It had been arranged that the attendance at the funeral should be confined to the family of the departed poet and philosopher, and Lamb, therefore, was spared the misery of going through the dismal ceremony of mourning. For the first week he forbore to write; but at its close he addressed the following short letter to one of the family of him whom he once so justly denominated Coleridge's "more than a friend."

"My dear Sir," he wrote to the Rev. Mr. Gilman, "the sad week being over, I must write to you to say, that I was glad of being spared from attending; I have no words to express my feelings with you all. I can only say that when you think a short visit from me would be acceptable, when your father and mother shall be able to see me *with comfort*, I will come to the bereaved house. Express to them my tenderest regards and hopes that they will continue our friends still. We both love and respect them as much as a human being can, and finally thank them with our hearts for what they have been to the poor departed.

"God bless you all. C. LAMB."

Shortly after, assured that his presence would be welcome, Lamb went to Highgate. There he asked leave to see the nurse who had attended upon Coleridge; and being struck and affected by the feeling she manifested towards his friend, insisted on her receiving five guineas from him,—a gratuity which seemed almost incomprehensible to the poor woman, but which Lamb could not help giving as an immediate expression of his own gratitude. From her he learned the effort by which Coleridge had suppressed the expression of his sufferings, and the discovery

affected him even more than the news of his death. He would startle his friends sometimes by suddenly exclaiming, "Coleridge is dead!" and then pass on to common themes, having obtained the momentary relief of oppressed spirits. He still continued, however, his monthly visits to Mr. Cary; and was ready to write an acrostic, or a complimentary epigram, at the suggestion of any friend.

A quiet dinner at the British Museum[1] with Mr. Cary once a month, to which Lamb looked forward with almost boyish eagerness, was now almost his only festival. Lamb's regard for him had now ripened into a fast friendship. In general, these were occasions on which Lamb observed the strictest rules of temperance; but once accident of stomach or of sentiment caused a woful deviation.[2] In a little note to his host about this time, he hints at one of his few physical tastes.—"We are thinking," he says, "of roast *shoulder* of mutton with onion sauce, but I scorn to prescribe to the hospitalities of mine host." The following, after these festivities had been interrupted by Mr. Cary's visit to the Continent, is their last memorial.

TO MR. CARY.

"Sept. 12, 1834.

"By Cot's plessing we will not be absence at the grace."

"Dear C.,—We long to see you, and hear account of your peregrinations, of the Tun at Heidelburg, the Clock of Strasburg, the statue at Rotterdam, the

[1] Lamb was admitted to the Museum so far back as May 12th, 1804, —"recommended" by Mr. Godwin.—F.

[2] "To be seen deliberately," he says in his apologetic letter, "to go out of the house of a clergyman drunk!"—F.

dainty Rhenish, and poignant Moselle wines, Westphalian hams, and Botargoes of Altona. But perhaps you have seen, not tasted any of these things.

"Yours, very glad to chain you back again to your proper centre, book and Bibliothecæ,

"C. and M. Lamb."

CHAPTER IX.

Lamb's Wednesday Nights.—His Companions.—Last Glimpses.

Two circles of rare social enjoyment—differing as widely as possible in all external circumstances—but each superior in its kind to all others, during the same period frankly opened to men of letters—now existing only in the memory of those who are fast departing from us—may, without offence, be placed side by side in grateful recollection; they are the dinners at Holland House and the suppers of "the Lambs" at the Temple, Great Russell Street, and Islington. Strange, at first, as this juxta-position may seem, a little reflection will convince the few survivors who have enjoyed both, that it involves no injustice to either; while with those who are too young to have been admitted to these rare festivities, we may exercise the privilege of age by boasting what good fellowship was once enjoyed, and what "good talk" there was once in the world!

But let us call to mind the aspects of each scene, before we attempt to tell of the conversation, which will be harder to recall and impossible to characterise. And first, let us invite the reader to assist at a dinner at Holland House in the height of the London and Parliamentary season, say a Saturday in June. It is scarcely seven—for the luxuries of the house are

enhanced by a punctuality in the main object of the day, which yields to no dilatory guest of whatever pretension—and you are seated in an oblong room, rich in old gilding, opposite a deep recess, pierced by large old windows through which the rich branches of trees bathed in golden light, just admit the faint outline of the Surrey Hills. Among the guests are some perhaps of the highest rank, always some of high political importance, about whom the interest of busy life gathers, intermixed with others eminent already in literature or art, or of that dawning promise which the hostess delights to discover and the host to smile on. All are assembled for the purpose of enjoyment; the anxieties of the minister, the feverish struggles of the partisan, the silent toils of the artist or critic, are finished for the week; professional and literary jealousies are hushed; sickness, decrepitude, and death are silently voted shadows; and the brilliant assemblage is prepared to exercise to the highest degree the extraordinary privilege of mortals to live in the knowledge of mortality without its consciousness, and to people the present hour with delights, as if a man lived and laughed and enjoyed in this world for ever. Every appliance of physical luxury which the most delicate art can supply, attends on each; every faint wish which luxury creates is anticipated; the noblest and most gracious countenance in the world smiles over the happiness it is diffusing, and redoubles it by cordial invitations and encouraging words, which set the humblest stranger guest at perfect ease. As the dinner merges into the dessert, and the sunset casts a richer glow on the branches, still, or lightly waving in the evening light, and on the scene within, the harmony of all sensations becomes more perfect; a

delighted and delighting chuckle invites attention to some jolly sally of the richest intellectual wit reflected in the faces of all, even to the favourite page in green, who attends his mistress with duty like that of the antique world; the choicest wines are enhanced in their liberal but temperate use by the vista opened in Lord Holland's tales of bacchanalian evenings at Brookes's, with Fox and Sheridan, when potations deeper and more serious rewarded the Statesman's toils and shortened his days; until at length the serener pleasure of conversation, of the now carelessly scattered groups, is enjoyed in that old, long, unrivalled library in which Addison mused, and wrote, and drank; where every living grace attends; "and more than echoes talk along the walls." One happy peculiarity of these assemblies was, the number of persons in different stations and of various celebrity, who were gratified by seeing, still more, in hearing and knowing each other; the statesman was relieved from care by associations with the poet of whom he had heard and partially read; and the poet was elevated by the courtesy which "bared the *great* heart," which "beats beneath a star;" and each felt, not rarely, the true dignity of the other, modestly expanding under the most genial auspices.

Now turn to No. 4, Inner Temple Lane, at ten o'clock, when the sedater part of the company are assembled, and the happier stragglers are dropping in from the play. Let it be any autumn or winter month, when the fire is blazing steadily, and the clean-swept hearth and whist-tables speak of the spirit of Mrs. Battle, and serious looks require "the rigour of the game." The furniture is old-fashioned and worn; the ceiling low, and not wholly unstained

by traces of "the great plant," though now virtuously forborne: but the Hogarths, in narrow black frames, abounding in infinite thought, humour, and pathos, enrich the walls; and all things wear an air of comfort and hearty English welcome. Lamb himself, yet unrelaxed by the glass, is sitting with a sort of Quaker primness at the whist-table, the gentleness of his melancholy smile half lost in his intentness on the game; his partner, the author of "Political Justice," (the majestic expression of his large head not disturbed by disproportion of his comparatively diminutive stature,) is regarding his hand with a philosophic but not a careless eye; Captain Burney, only not venerable because so young in spirit, sits between them; and H. C. R., who alone now and then breaks the proper silence, to welcome some incoming guest, is his happy partner—true winner in the game of life, whose leisure achieved early, is devoted to his friends! At another table, just beyond the circle which extends from the fire, sit another four. The broad, burly, jovial bulk of John Lamb, the Ajax Telamon of the slender clerks of the old South Sea House, whom he sometimes introduces to the rooms of his younger brother, surprised to learn from them that he is growing famous, confronts the stately but courteous Alsager; while P., "his few hairs bristling" at gentle objurgation watches his partner M. B., dealing, with "soul more white"[1] than the hands of which Lamb once said, "M., if dirt was trumps, what hands you would hold!" In one

[1] Lamb's Sonnet, dedicatory of his first volume of prose to this cherished friend, thus concludes:

"Free from self-seeking, envy, low design,
I have not found a whiter soul than thine."

corner of the room, you may see the pale earnest countenance of Charles Lloyd, who is discoursing "of fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute," with Leigh Hunt; and if you choose to listen, you will scarcely know which most to admire—the severe logic of the melancholy reasoner, or its graceful evasion by the tricksome fantasy of the joyous poet. Basil Montague, gentle enthusiast in the cause of humanity, which he has lived to see triumphant, is pouring into the outstretched ear of George Dyer some tale of legalised injustice, which the recipient is vainly endeavouring to comprehend. Soon the room begins to fill; in *slouches* Hazlitt from the theatre, where his stubborn anger for Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo has been softened by Miss Stephens's angelic notes, which might "chase anger, and grief, and fear, and sorrow, and pain from mortal or immortal minds;" Kenney, with a tremulous pleasure, announces that there is a crowded house to the ninth representation of his new comedy, of which Lamb lays down his cards to inquire; or Ayrton, mildly radiant, whispers the continual triumph of "Don Giovanni," for which Lamb, incapable of opera, is happy to take his word. Now and then an actor glances on us from "the rich Cathay" of the world behind the scenes, with news of its brighter human-kind, and with looks reflecting the public favour—Liston, grave beneath the weight of the town's regards—or Miss Kelly, unexhausted in spirit by alternating the drolleries of high farce with the terrible pathos of melodrama,—or Charles Kemble mirrors the chivalry of thought, and ennobles the party by bending on them looks beaming with the aristocracy of nature. Meanwhile Becky lays the

cloth on the side-table, under the direction of the most quiet, sensible, and kind of women—who soon compels the younger and more hungry of the guests to partake largely of the cold roast lamb or boiled beef, the heaps of smoking roasted potatoes, and the vast jug of porter, often replenished from the foaming pots, which the best tap of Fleet Street supplies. Perfect freedom prevails, save when the hospitable pressure of the mistress excuses excess; and perhaps, the physical enjoyment of the playgoer exhausted with pleasure, or of the author jaded with the labour of the brain, is not less than that of the guests at the most charming of aristocratic banquets. As the hot water and its accompaniments appear, and the severities of whist relax, the light of conversation thickens: Hazlitt, catching the influence of the spirit from which he has lately begun to abstain, utters some fine criticism with struggling emphasis; Lamb stammers out puns suggestive of wisdom, for happy Barron Field to admire and echo; the various driblets of talk combine into a stream, while Miss Lamb moves gently about to see that each modest stranger is duly served; turning, now and then, an anxious loving eye on Charles, which is softened into a half humorous expression of resignation to inevitable fate, as he mixes his second tumbler! This is on ordinary nights, when the accustomed Wednesday-men assemble; but there is a difference on great extra nights, gladdened by "the bright visitations" of Wordsworth or Coleridge; the cordiality of the welcome is the same, but a sedater wisdom prevails. Happy hours were they for the young disciple of the then desperate, now triumphant cause of Wordsworth's genius, to be admitted to the presence of the

poet who had opened a new world for him in the undiscovered riches of his own nature, and its affinities with the outer universe; whom he worshipped the more devoutly for the world's scorn; for whom he felt the future in the instant, and anticipated the "All hail hereafter!" which the great poet has lived to enjoy! To win him to speak of his own poetry—to hear him recite its noblest passages—and to join in his brave defiance of the fashion of the age—was the solemn pleasure of such a season; and, of course, superseded all minor disquisitions. So, when Coleridge came, argument, wit, humour, criticism were hushed; the pertest, smartest, and the cleverest felt that all were assembled to listen; and if a card-table had been filled, or a dispute begun before he was excited to continuous speech, his gentle voice, undulating in music, soon

> "Suspended *whist*, and took with ravishment
> The thronging audience.[1]

[1] Mr. Procter's recollections of these evenings are not less interesting. "None of Lamb's intimates," he says, "were persons of title or fashion, or of any political importance. They were reading men, or authors, or old friends who had no name or pretensions. None of them ever forsook him; they loved him, and in return he had a strong regard for them. When you went to Lamb's rooms on the Wednesday evenings (his 'At Home') you generally found the card-table spread out, Lamb himself one of the players. On the corner of the table was a snuff-box; and the game was enlivened by sundry brief ejaculations and pungent questions, which kept alive the wits of the party present. When the conversation became general, Lamb's part in it was very effective. His short clear sentences always produced effect. He never joined in talk unless he understood the subject; then, if the matter in question interested him, he was not slow in showing earnestness: but I never heard him argue or talk for argument's sake. If he was indifferent to the question, he was silent.

"The supper of cold meat, on these occasions, was always on the

The conversation which animated each of these memorable circles, approximated, in essence, much

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each night was very lively, as may be imagined, and every one might say what it chose, and eat a chop or take a glass of punch, without subjecting to the resentment of the rest of the company. Lamb would perhaps call out and bid the hungry guest help himself without ceremony.

He was anxious to observe the gentleness to Lamb's enemy as to his various guests, although it was courteous to all. With Hazlitt he talked as though they met the subject in discussion on equal terms; with Leigh Hunt he exchanged repartee, to Wordsworth he was almost respectful; with Coleridge he was sometimes jocose, sometimes deferring; with Martin Burney facetiously familiar, with Manning affectionate, with Godwin merely courteous, or I should say in a minor degree. The man whom I found at Lamb's house more frequently than any other person was Martin Burney. Lamb was very much attached to Martin, who was a sincere and able man, although with a not unimpressive grotesqueness. His face was warped by paralysis, which affected one eye and one side of his mouth. He was shy, and conflicted in manner very diffident and retiring, yet commanding his opinions when asked to do so without apology or hesitation. He was a barrister, and travelled the western circuit at the same time as Sir Thomas Wilde, who made Lord Truro, which Martin used to read before the other candidates there, morning out the principal facts and points for attention. Martin Burney had excellent taste in books, understood the theory and artifices and looked into the sterling qualities of writing. He frequently accompanied Lamb to dwellings to friends, and although very familiar with Charles, he always spoke of him with respect, as Mr. Lamb. The last time I saw Martin was at the corner of a street in London, where he was overlooking on the subject of Raffaelle and Michael Angelo. After a great and prolonged struggle he said he had arrived at the conclusion that Raffaelle was the greater man of the two.

Notwithstanding Lamb's somewhat humble description of his dinners and lunches, some of them were most well known in literature. Amongst others, I met there, Messrs. Coleridge, Manning, Hazlitt, Hayden, Wordsworth, Barron Field, Leigh Hunt, Crabbe Robinson, Kenyon, Talfourd, Rogers, Colman, the Barrows, Procter, Collier, and others whose names I need not chronicle. I met there, too, on one or

more nearly than might be surmised from the difference in station of the principal talkers, and the contrast in physical appliances; that of the bowered saloon of Holland House having more of earnestness and depth, and that of the Temple attic more of airy grace than would be predicated by a superficial observer. The former possessed the peculiar interest of directly bordering on the scene of political conflict—gathering together the most eloquent leaders of the Whig party, whose repose from energetic action spoke of the week's conflict, and in whom the moment's enjoyment derived a peculiar charm from the perilous glories of the struggle which the morrow was to renew—when power was just within reach, or held with a convulsive grasp—like the eager and solemn pleasure of the soldiers' banquet in the pause of victory. The pervading spirit of Lamb's parties was also that of social progress; but it was the spirit of

two occasions, Liston, and Miss Kelly, and, I believe, Rickman. Politics were rarely discussed amongst them. Anecdotes, characteristic, showing the strong and weak points of human nature, were frequent enough. But politics (especially party politics) were seldom admitted. Lamb disliked them as a theme for evening talk; he perhaps did not understand the subject scientifically. And when Hazlitt's impetuosity drove him, as it sometimes did, into fierce expressions on public affairs, these were usually received in silence; and the matter thus raised up for assent or controversy was allowed to drop. The beauty of these evenings was that every one was placed upon an easy level. No one out-topped the others. No one—not even Coleridge—was permitted to out-talk the rest. No one was allowed to lector the other, or to bring his own grievances too prominently forward; so as to disturb the harmony of the night. I never in all my life, heard so much unpretending good sense talked, as at Charles Lamb's social parties. Often a piece of sparkling humour was shot out that illuminated the whole evening. Sometimes there was a flight of high and earnest talk, that took one half way towards the stars."—F.

the dreamers and thinkers, not of the combatants of the world—men who, it may be, drew their theories from a deeper range of meditation, and embraced the future with more comprehensive hope—but about whom the immediate interest of party did not gather; whose victories were all within; whose rewards were visions of blessings for their species in the furthest horizon of benevolent prophecy. If a profounder thought was sometimes dragged to light in the dim circle of Lamb's companions than was native to the brighter sphere, it was still a rare felicity to watch there the union of elegance with purpose in some leader of party—the delicate, almost fragile grace of illustration in some one, perhaps destined to lead advancing multitudes or to withstand their rashness; —to observe the growth of strength in the midst of beauty expanding from the sense of the heroic past, as the famed Basil tree of Boccaccio grew from the immolated relic beneath it. If the alternations in the former oscillated between wider extremes, touching on the wildest farce and most earnest tragedy of life; the rich space of brilliant comedy which lived ever between them in the latter, was diversified by serious interests and heroic allusions. Sydney Smith's wit —not so wild, so grotesque, so deep-searching as Lamb's—had even more quickness of intellectual demonstration; wedded moral and political wisdom to happiest language, with a more rapid perception of secret affinities; was capable of producing epigrammatic splendour reflected more permanently in the mind, than the fantastic brilliancy of those rich conceits which Lamb stammered out with his painful smile. Mackintosh might vie with Coleridge in vast and various knowledge; but there the competition

between these great talkers ends, and the contrast begins; the contrast between facility and inspiration; between the ready access to each ticketed and labelled compartment of history, science, art, criticism, and the genius that fused and renovated all. But then a younger spirit appeared at Lord Holland's table to redress the balance—not so poetical as Coleridge, but more lucid—in whose vast and joyous memory all the mighty past lived and glowed anew; whose declamations presented, not groups tinged with distant light, like those of Coleridge, but a series of historical figures in relief, exhibited in bright succession, as if by dioramic art there glided before us embossed surfaces of heroic life.[1] Rogers too was there—con-

[1] I take leave to copy the glowing picture of the evenings of Holland House and of its admirable master, drawn by this favourite guest himself, from an article which adorned the *Edinburgh Review*, just after Lord Holland's death.

"The time is coming when, perhaps a few old men, the last survivors of our generation, will in vain seek, amidst new streets, and squares, and railway stations, for the site of that dwelling which was in their youth the favourite resort of wits and beauties—of painters and poets—of scholars, philosophers, and statesmen. They will then remember, with strange tenderness, many objects once familiar to them—the avenue and the terrace, the busts and the paintings; the carving, the grotesque gilding, and the enigmatical mottoes. With peculiar fondness, they will recall that venerable chamber, in which all the antique gravity of a college library was so singularly blended with all that female grace and wit could devise to embellish a drawing-room. They will recollect, not unmoved, those shelves loaded with the varied learning of many lands and many ages; those portraits in which were preserved the features of the best and wisest Englishmen of two generations. They will recollect how many men who have guided the politics of Europe—who have moved great assemblies by reason and eloquence—who have put life into bronze and canvas, or who have left to posterity things so written as it shall not willingly let them die—were there mixed with all that was loveliest and gayest in the society

necting the literature of the last age with this, partaking of some of the best characteristics of both —whose first poem sparkled in the closing darkness of the last century "like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear," and who was advancing from a youth which had anticipated memory, to an age of kindness and hope; and Moore, who paused in the fluttering expression

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of the most splendid of capitals. They will remember the singular character which belonged to that circle, in which every talent and accomplishment, every art and science, had its place. They will remember how the last debate was discussed in one corner, and the last comedy of Scribe in another; while Wilkie gazed with modest admiration on Reynolds' Baretti; while Mackintosh turned over Thomas Aquinas to verify a quotation; while Talleyrand related his conversations with Barras at the Luxemburg, or his ride with Lannes over the field of Austerlitz. They will remember, above all, the grace—and the kindness, far more admirable than grace—with which the princely hospitality of that ancient mansion was dispensed. They will remember the venerable and benignant countenance, and the cordial voice of him who bade them welcome. They will remember that temper which years of pain, of sickness, of lameness, of confinement, seemed only to make sweeter and sweeter; and that frank politeness, which at once relieved all the embarrassment of the youngest and most timid writer or artist, who found himself for the first time among Ambassadors and Earls. They will remember that constant flow of conversation, so natural, so animated, so various, so rich with observation and anecdote; that wit which never gave a wound; that exquisite mimicry which ennobled, instead of degrading; that goodness of heart which appeared in every look and accent, and gave additional value to every talent and acquirement. They will remember, too, that he whose name they hold in reverence was not less distinguished by the inflexible uprightness of his political conduct, than by his loving disposition and his winning manners. They will remember that, in the last lines which he traced, he expressed his joy that he had done nothing unworthy of the friend of Fox and Grey; and they will have reason to feel similar joy, if, in looking back on many troubled years, they cannot accuse themselves of having done anything unworthy of men who were distinguished by the friendship of Lord Holland."

of graceful trifles, to whisper some deep-toned thought of Ireland's wrongs and sorrows.

Literature and art supplied the favourite topics to each of these assemblies,—both discussed with earnest admiration, but surveyed in different aspects. The conversation at Lord Holland's was wont to mirror the happiest aspects of the living mind; to celebrate the latest discoveries in science; to echo the quarterly decisions of imperial criticism; to reflect the modest glow of young reputations;—all was gay, graceful, decisive, as if the pen of Jeffrey could have spoken; or, if it reverted to old times, it rejoiced in those classical associations which are always young. At Lamb's, on the other hand, the topics were chiefly sought among the obscure and remote; the odd, the quaint, the fantastic were drawn out from their dusty recesses; nothing could be more foreign to its embrace than the modern circulating library, even when it teemed with the Scotch novels. Whatever the subject was, however, in the more aristocratic, or the humbler sphere, it was always discussed by those best entitled to talk on it; no others had a chance of being heard. This remarkable freedom from *bores* was produced in Lamb's circle by the authoritative texture of its commanding minds; in Lord Holland's, by the more direct, and more genial influence of the hostess, which checked that tenacity of subject and opinion which sometimes broke the charm of Lamb's parties by "a duel in the form of a debate." Perhaps beyond any other hostess,—certainly far beyond any host, Lady Holland possessed the task of perceiving, and the power of evoking the various capacities which lurked in every part of the brilliant circles over which she presided, and restrained each to its appropriate

sphere, and portion of the evening. To enkindle the enthusiasm of an artist on the theme over which he had achieved the most facile mastery; to set loose the heart of the rustic poet, and imbue his speech with the freedom of his native hills; to draw from the adventurous traveller a breathing picture of his most imminent danger; or to embolden the bashful soldier to disclose his own share in the perils and glories of some famous battle-field; to encourage the generous praise of friendship when the speaker and the subject reflected interest on each other; or win from an awkward man of science the secret history of a discovery which had astonished the world; to conduct these brilliant developments to the height of satisfaction, and then to shift the scene by the magic of a word, were among her nightly successes. And if this extraordinary power over the elements of social enjoyment was sometimes wielded without the entire concealment of its despotism; if a decisive check sometimes rebuked a speaker who might intercept the variegated beauty of Jeffrey's indulgent criticism, or the jest announced and self-rewarded in Sydney Smith's cordial and triumphant laugh, the authority was too clearly exerted for the evening's prosperity, and too manifestly impelled by an urgent consciousness of the value of these golden hours which were fleeting within its confines, to sadden the enforced silence with more than a momentary regret. If ever her prohibition—clear, abrupt, and decisive,—indicated more than a preferable regard for livelier discourse, it was when a depreciatory tone was adopted towards genius, or goodness, or honest endeavour, or when some friend, personal or intellectual, was mentioned in slighting phrase. Habituated to a generous partisanship, by

strong sympathy with a great political cause, she carried the fidelity of her devotion to that cause into her social relations, and was ever the truest and the fastest of friends. The tendency, often more idle than malicious, to soften down the intellectual claims of the absent, which so insidiously besets literary conversation, and teaches a superficial insincerity, even to substantial esteem and regard, and which was sometimes insinuated into the conversation of Lamb's friends, though never into his own, found no favour in her presence; and hence the conversations over which she presided, perhaps beyond all that ever flashed with a kindred splendour, were marked by that integrity of good nature which might admit of their exact repetition to every living individual whose merits were discussed, without the danger of inflicting pain. Under her auspices, not only all critical, but all personal talk was tinged with kindness; the strong interest which she took in the happiness of her friends, shed a peculiar sunniness over the aspects of life presented by the common topics of alliances, and marriages, and promotions; and there was not a hopeful engagement, or a happy wedding, or a promotion of a friend's son, or a new intellectual triumph of any youth with whose name and history she was familiar, but became an event on which she expected and required congratulation as on a part of her own fortune. Although there was necessarily a preponderance in her society of the sentiment of popular progress, which once was cherished almost exclusively by the party to whom Lord Holland was united by sacred ties, no expression of triumph in success, no virulence in sudden disappointment, was ever permitted to wound the most sensitive ears of her conservative guests. It might be

that some placid comparison of recent with former times, spoke a sense of freedom's peaceful victory; or that, on the giddy edge of some great party struggle, the festivities of the evening might take a more serious cast, as the news arrived from the scene of contest, and the pleasure might be deepened by the peril; but the feeling was always restrained by the supremacy given to those permanent solaces for the mind, in the beautiful and the great, which no political changes disturb. Although the death of the noble master of the venerated mansion closed its portals for ever on the exquisite enjoyments to which they had been so generously expanded, the art of conversation lived a little longer in the smaller circle which Lady Holland still drew almost daily around her; honouring his memory by following his example, and struggling against the perpetual sense of unutterable bereavement, by rendering to literature that honour and those reliefs, which English aristocracy has too often denied it: and seeking consolation in making others proud and happy. That lingering happiness is extinct now; Lamb's kindred circle—kindred, though so different—dispersed almost before he died; the "thoughts that wandered through eternity," are no longer expressed in time; the fancies and conceits, "gay creatures of the element" of social delight, "that in the colours of the rainbow lived, and played in the plighted clouds," flicker only in the backward perspective of waning years; and for the survivors, I may venture to affirm, no such conversation as they have shared in either circle will ever be theirs again in this world![1]

[1] This elaborate comparison between the Holland House coterie and Lamb's supper parties, is admitted to be rather far-fetched.—F.

CHAPTER IX.

Lamb's Friends and Companions.

Before closing these Memorials of Charles and Mary Lamb, it may be permitted me to glance separately at some of the friends who are grouped around them in memory, and who, like them, live only in recollection, and in the works they have left behind them.

George Dyer was one of the first objects of Lamb's youthful reverence, for he had attained the stately rank of Grecian in the venerable school of Christ's Hospital, when Charles entered it, a little, timid, affectionate, child: but this boyish respect, once amounting to awe, gave place to a familiar habit of loving banter, which, springing from the depths of old regard, approximated to schoolboy roguery, and, now and then, though very rarely, gleamed on the consciousness of the ripe scholar. No contrast could be more vivid than that presented by the relations of each to the literature they both loved; one divining its inmost essences, plucking out the heart of its mysteries, shedding light on its dimmest recesses; the other devoted, with equal assiduity, to its externals. Books, to Dyer, "were a real world, both pure and good;" among them he passed, unconscious of time, from youth to extreme age, vegetating on their

dates and forms, and "trivial fond records," in the learned air of great libraries, or the dusty confusion of his own, with the least possible apprehension of any human interest vital in their pages, or of any spirit of wit or fancy glancing across them. His life was an Academic pastoral. Methinks I see his gaunt, awkward form, set off by trousers too short, like those outgrown by a gawky lad, and a rusty coat as much too large for the wearer, hanging about him like those garments which the aristocratic Milesian peasantry prefer to the most comfortable rustic dress; his long head silvered over with short yet straggling hair, and his dark grey eyes glistening with faith and wonder, as Lamb satisfies the curiosity which has gently disturbed his studies as to the authorship of the Waverley Novels, by telling him, in the strictest confidence, that they are the works of Lord Castlereagh, just returned from the Congress of Sovereigns at Vienna! Off he runs, with animated stride and shambling enthusiasm, nor stops till he reaches Maida Hill, and breathes his news into the startled ear of Leigh Hunt, who, "as a public writer," ought to be possessed of the great fact with which George is laden! Or shall I endeavour to revive the bewildered look with which, just after he had been announced as one of Lord Stanhope's executors and residuary legatees, he received Lamb's grave inquiry, "Whether it was true, as commonly reported, that he was to be made a Lord?" "O dear no! Mr. Lamb," responded he with earnest seriousness, but not without a moment's quivering vanity, "I could not think of such a thing; it is not true, I assure you." "I thought not," said Lamb, "and I contradict it wherever I go; but the Government will not

ask your consent; they may raise you to the peerage without your even knowing it." "I hope not, Mr. Lamb; indeed, indeed, I hope not; it would not suit me at all," responded Dyer, and went his way, musing on the possibility of a strange honour descending on his reluctant brow. Or shall I recall the visible presentment of his bland unconsciousness of evil when his sportive friend taxed it to the utmost, by suddenly asking what he thought of the murderer Williams, who, after destroying two families in Ratcliffe Highway, had broken prison by suicide, and whose body had just before been conveyed, in shocking procession, to its cross-road grave! The desperate attempt to compel the gentle optimist to speak ill of a mortal creature produced no happier success than the answer, "Why I should think, Mr. Lamb, he must have been rather an eccentric character." This simplicity of a nature not only unspotted by the world, but almost abstracted from it, will seem the more remarkable, when it is known that it was subjected, at the entrance of life, to a hard battle with fortune. Dyer was the son of very poor parents, residing in an eastern suburb of London, Stepney or Bethnal-greenward, where he attracted the attention of two elderly ladies as a serious child, with an extraordinary love for books. They obtained for him a presentation to Christ's Hospital, which he entered at seven years of age; fought his way through its sturdy ranks to its head; and, at nineteen, quitted it for Cambridge, with only an exhibition and his scholarly accomplishments to help him. On he went, however, placid, if not rejoicing, through the difficulties of a life illustrated only by scholarship; encountering tremendous labours; unresting yet serene; until at eighty-five he breathed

out the most blameless of lives, which began in a struggle to end in a learned dream![1]

Mr. Godwin, who during the happiest period of Lamb's weekly parties, was a constant assistant at his whist-table, resembled Dyer in simplicity of manner and devotion to letters; but the simplicity was more superficial, and the devotion more profound than the kindred qualities in the guileless scholar; and, instead of forming the entire being, only marked the surface of a nature beneath which extraordinary power lay hidden. As the absence of worldly wisdom subjected Dyer to the sportive sallies of Lamb, so a like deficiency in Godwin exposed him to the coarser mirth of Mr. Horne Tooke, who was sometimes inclined to seek relaxation for the iron muscles of his imper-

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[1] Mr. Crabb Robinson gives a pleasant sketch of George Dyer:—"One of the best creatures morally that ever breathed. He was son of a watchman at Wapping, and put to a charity school by some pious Dissenting people. He was a scholar, but to the end of his days (and he lived to be eighty-five) was a bookseller's drudge. He led a life of literary labour in poverty—made indexes, corrected the press, and gave lessons in Latin and Greek." Wordsworth considered his Life of R. Robinson to be one of the best works of biography in the language. Reid's epigram is well known:

> "The world all say, my gentle Dyer,
> Thy odes so very much want fire;
> Repair the fault, my gentle Dyer,
> And throw thy odes into the fire."

It is said that he would "literally give away his last guinea." Lord Stanhope made him one of his six executors and residuary legatees, with Charles Fox. Dyer was the first to declare that he rejected the legacy and renounced the executorship; but the heir insisted on his accepting a small annuity. Finally, in his old age he married his laundress, with the encouragement and advice of his friends, and died in March, 1841. Mrs. Dyer died at the age of ninety-nine having survived four husbands.—F.

turbable mind in trying to make a philosopher look foolish. To a stranger's gaze the author of the "Political Justice" and "Caleb Williams," as he appeared in the Temple, always an object of curiosity except to his familiars, presented none of those characteristics with which fancy had invested the daring speculator and relentless novelist; nor, when he broke silence, did his language tend to reconcile the reality with the expectation. The disproportion of a frame which, low of stature, was surmounted by a massive head which might befit a presentable giant, was rendered almost imperceptible, not by any vivacity of expression (for his countenance was rarely lighted up by the deep-seated genius within), but by a gracious suavity of manner which many "a fine old English gentleman" might envy. His voice was small; the topics of his ordinary conversation trivial, and discussed with a delicacy and precision which might almost be mistaken for finical; and the presence of the most interesting persons in literary society, of which he had enjoyed the best, would not prevent him from falling after dinner into the most profound sleep. This gentle, drowsy, spiritless demeanour, presents a striking contrast to a reputation which once filled Europe with its echoes; but it was, in truth, when rightly understood, perfectly consistent with those intellectual elements which in some raised the most enthusiastic admiration, and from others elicited the wildest denunciations of visionary terror.

In Mr. Godwin's mind, the faculty of abstract reason so predominated over all others, as practically to extinguish them; and his taste, akin to this faculty, sought only for its development through the medium of composition for the press. He had no imagination,

no fancy, no wit, no humour; or if he possessed any of those faculties, they were obscured by that of pure reason; and being wholly devoid of the quick sensibility which irritates speech into eloquence, and of the passion for immediate excitement and applause, which tends to its presentment before admiring assemblies, he desired no other audience than that which he could silently address, and learned to regard all things through a contemplative medium. In this sense, far more than in the extravagant application of his wildest theories, he levelled all around him; admitted no greatness but that of literature; and neither desired nor revered any triumphs but those of thought. If such a reasoning faculty, guided by such a disposition, had been applied to abstract sciences, no effect remarkable beyond that of rare excellence would have been produced; but the apparent anomalies of Mr. Godwin's intellectual history arose from the application of his power to the passions, the interests, and the hopes of mankind, at a time when they enkindled into frightful action, and when he calmly worked out his problems among their burning elements with the "ice-brook's temper," and the severest logic. And if some extreme conclusions were inconsistent with the faith and the duty which alone can sustain and regulate our nature, there was no small compensation in the severity of the process to which the student was impelled, for the slender peril which might remain lest the results should be practically adopted. A system founded on pure reason, which rejected the impulses of natural affection, the delights of gratitude, the influences of prejudice, the bondage of custom, the animation of personal hope; which appealed to no passion—which suggested no

luxury—which excited no animosities—and which offered no prize for the observance of its laws, except a participation in the expanding glories of progressive humanity, was little calculated to allure from the accustomed paths of ancient ordinance any man disposed to walk in them by the lights from heaven. On the other hand, it was a healthful diversion from those seductions in which the heart secretly enervates and infects the understanding, to invite the revolutionary speculator to the contemplation of the distant and the refined; by the pursuit of impracticable error to brace the mind for the achievement of everlasting truth; and on the "heat and flame of the distemper" of an impassioned democracy to "sprinkle cool patience." The idol Political Justice, of which he was the slow and laborious architect, if it for a while enchanted, did not long enthral or ever debase its worshippers; "its bones were marrowless, its blood was cold,"—but there was surely "speculation in its eyes" which "glared withal" into the future. Such high casuistry as it evoked has always an ennobling tendency, even when it dallies with error; the direction of thought in youth is of less consequence than the mode of its exercise; and it is only when the base interests and sensual passions of mortality pander to the understanding that truth may fear for the issue.

The author of this cold and passionless intellectual phantasy looked out upon the world he hoped to inform from recesses of contemplation which the outward incidents of life did not disturb, and which, when closed, left him a common man, appearing to superficial observers rather below than above the level of ordinary talkers. To his inward gaze the stupendous changes which agitated Europe, at the time he wrote,

were silent as a picture. The pleasure of his life was to think of; its business was to write; all else in it was vanity. Regarding his own being through the same spiritualising medium, he saw no reason why the springs of its existence should wear out, and, in the spring-time of his speculation, held that man might become immortal on earth by the effort of the will. His style partook of the quality of his intellect and the character of its purposes—it was pure, simple, colourless. His most imaginative passages are inspired only by a logic quickened into enthusiasm by the anticipation of the approaching discovery of truth —the dawning *Eureka* of the reasoner; they are usually composed of "line upon line and precept upon precept," without an involution of style, or an eddy in the thought. He sometimes complained, though with the benignity that always marked his estimate of his opponents, that Mr. Malthus's style was too richly ornamented for argument; and certainly, with all its vivacity of illustration it lacks the transparent simplicity of his own. The most palpable result which he ever produced by his writings was the dark theory in the first edition of the work on Population, which was presented as an answer to his reasoning on behalf of the perfectibility of man; and he used to smile at his ultimate triumph, when the writer, who had only intended a striking paradox, tamed it down to the wisdom of economy, and adapted it to Poor-law uses; neutralised his giant spectres of Vice and Misery by the practical intervention of Moral Restraint; and left the optimist, Godwin, still in unclouded possession of the hope of universal peace and happiness, postponed only to that time when passion shall be subjected to reason, and population no more rising like a resistless

tide, between adamantine barriers to submerge the renovated earth, shall obey the commands of wisdom; rise and fall as the means of subsistence expand or contract; and only contribute an impulse to the universal harmony.

The persons of Mr. Godwin's romances—stranger still—are the naked creations of the same intellectual power, marvellously endowed with galvanic life. Though with happier symmetry, they are as much made out of chains and links of reasoning, as the monster was fashioned by the chemistry of the student, in the celebrated novel of his gifted daughter. Falkland, and Caleb Williams, are the mere impersonations of the unbounded love of reputation, and irresistible curiosity; these ideas are developed in each with masterly iteration—to the two ideas all causes give way; and materials are subjected, often of remarkable coarseness, to the refinement of the conception. Hazlitt used to observe of these two characters, that the manner they are played into each other, was equal to anything of the kind in the drama; and there is no doubt that the opposition, though at the cost of probability, is most powerfully maintained: but the effect is partly owing to the absence of all extrinsic interest which could interfere with the main purpose; the beatings of the heart become audible, not only from their own intensity, but from the desolation which the author has expanded around them. The consistency in each is that of an idea, not of a character; and if the effect of form and colour is produced, it is, as in line engraving, by the infinite minuteness and delicacy of the single strokes. In like manner, the incidents by which the author seeks to exemplify the wrongs inflicted by power on goodness in civilised society, are

utterly fantastical; nothing can be more minute, nothing more unreal; the youth being involved by a web of circumstances woven to immesh him, which the condition of society that the author intends to repudiate, renders impossible; and which, if true, would prove not that the framework of law is tyrannous, but that the will of a single oppressor may elude it. The subject of "St. Leon" is more congenial to the author's power; but it is, in like manner, a logical development of the consequences of a being prolonged on earth through ages; and, as the dismal vista expands, the skeleton speculators crowd in to mock and sadden us!

Mr. Godwin was thus a man of two beings, which held little discourse with each other—the daring inventor of theories constructed of air-drawn diagrams—and the simple gentleman, who suffered nothing to disturb or excite him, beyond his study. He loved to walk in the crowded streets of London, not like Lamb, enjoying the infinite varieties of many-coloured life around him, but because he felt, amidst the noise, and crowd, and glare, more intensely the imperturbable stillness of his own contemplations. His means of comfortable support were mainly supplied by a shop in Skinner Street, where, under the auspices of "M. J. Godwin and Co.," the prettiest and wisest books for children issued, which old-fashioned parents presented to their children, without suspecting that the graceful lessons of piety and goodness which charmed away the selfishness of infancy, were published, and sometimes revised, and now and then written, by a philosopher whom they would scarcely venture to name! He met the exigencies which the vicissitudes of business sometimes caused, with the trusting simplicity

which marked his course—he asked his friends for aid without scruple, considering that their means were justly the due of one who toiled in thought for their inward life, and had little time to provide for his own outward existence; and took their excuses, when offered, without doubt or offence. The very next day after I had been honoured and delighted by an introduction to him at Lamb's chambers, I was made still more proud and happy by his appearance at my own on such an errand—which my poverty, not my will, rendered abortive. After some pleasant chat on indifferent matters, he carelessly observed, that he had a little bill for £150 falling due on the morrow, which he had forgotten till that morning, and desired the loan of the necessary amount for a few weeks. At first, in eager hope of being able thus to oblige one whom I regarded with admiration akin to awe, I began to consider whether it was possible for me to raise such a sum; but, alas! a moment's reflection sufficed to convince me that the hope was vain, and I was obliged, with much confusion, to assure my distinguished visitor how glad I should have been to serve him, but that I was only just starting as a special pleader, was obliged to write for magazines to help me on, and had not such a sum in the world. "Oh dear," said the philosopher, "I thought you were a young gentleman of fortune—don't mention it—don't mention it; I shall do very well elsewhere:"—and then, in the most gracious manner, reverted to our former topics; and sat in my small room for half an hour, as if to convince me that my want of fortune made no difference in his esteem. A slender tribute to the literature he had loved and served so well, was accorded to him in the old age to which he attained,

by the gift of a sinecure in the Exchequer, of about £200 a-year, connected with the custody of the Records; and the last time I saw him, he was heaving an immense key to unlock the musty treasures of which he was guardian—how unlike those he had unlocked, with finer talisman, for the astonishment and alarm of one generation, and the delight of all others!

John Thelwall, who had once exulted in the appellation of Citizen Thelwall, having been associated with Coleridge and Southey in their days of enthusiastical dreaming, though a more precise and practical reformer than either, was introduced by them to Lamb, and was welcomed to his circle, in the true catholicism of its spirit, although its master cared nothing for the Roman virtue which Thelwall devotedly cherished, and which Horne Tooke kept in uncertain vibration between a rebellion and a hoax. Lamb justly esteemed Thelwall as a thoroughly honest man;—not honest merely in reference to the moral relations of life, but to the processes of thought; one whose mind, acute, vigorous, and direct, perceived only the object immediately before it, and, undisturbed by collateral circumstances, reflected, with literal fidelity, the impression it received, and maintained it as sturdily against the beauty that might soften it, or the wisdom that might mould it, as against the tyranny that would stifle its expression. "If to be honest as the world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand," to be honest as the mind works is to be one man of a million; and such a man was Thelwall. Starting with imperfect education from the thraldom of domestic oppression, with slender knowledge, but with fiery zeal, into the dangers of political enterprise, and treading fear-

lessly on the verge of sedition, he saw nothing before him but powers which he assumed to be despotism and vice, and rushed headlong to crush them. The point of time—just that when the accumulated force of public opinion had obtained a virtual mastery over the accumulated corruptions of ages, but when power, still unconvinced of its danger, presented its boldest front to opposing intellect, or strove to crush it in the cruelty of awaking fear—gave scope for the ardent temperament of an orator almost as poor in scholastic cultivation as in external fortune; but strong in integrity, and rich in burning words.

Thus passionate, Thelwall spoke boldly and vehemently—at a time when indignation was thought to be a virtue; but there is no reason to believe he ever meditated any treason except that accumulated in the architectural sophistry of Lord Eldon, by which he proved a person who desired to awe the Government into a change of policy to be guilty of compassing the king's death—as thus:—that the king must resist the proposed alteration in his measures—that resisting he must be deposed—and that being deposed, he must necessarily die;—though his boldness of speech placed him in jeopardy even after the acquittals of his simple-minded associate Hardy, and his enigmatical instructor Tooke, who forsook him, and left him, when acquitted, to the mercy of the world. His life, which before this event had been one of self-denial and purity remarkable in a young man who had imbibed the impulses of revolutionary France, partook of considerable vicissitude. At one time, he was raised by his skill in correcting impediments of speech, and teaching elocution as a science, into elegant competence—at other times saddened by the

difficulties of poorly requited literary toil and wholly unrequited patriotism; but he preserved his integrity and his cheerfulness—"a man of hope and forward-looking mind even to the last." Unlike Godwin, whose profound thoughts slowly struggled into form, and seldom found utterance in conversation,—speech was, in him, all in all, his, delight, his profession, his triumph, with little else than passion to inspire or colour it. The flaming orations of his "Tribune," rendered more piquant by the transparent masquerade of ancient history, which, in his youth, "touched monied worldlings with dismay," and infected the poor with dangerous anger, seemed vapid, spiritless, and shallow when addressed through the press to the leisure of the thoughtful. The light which glowed with so formidable a lustre before the evening audience, vanished on closer examination, and proved to be only a harmless phantom-vapour which left no traces of destructive energy behind it.

Thelwall, in person small, compact, muscular—with a head denoting indomitable resolution, and features deeply furrowed by the ardent workings of the mind,—was as energetic in all his pursuits and enjoyments as in political action. He was earnestly devoted to the Drama, and enjoyed its greatest representations with the freshness of a boy who sees a play for the first time. He hailed the kindred energy of Kean with enthusiastic praise; but abjuring the narrowness of his political vision in matters of taste, did justice to the nobler qualities of Mrs. Siddons and her brothers. In literature and art also, he relaxed the bigotry of his liberal intolerance, and expatiated in their wider fields with a taste more catholic. Here Lamb was ready with his sympathy, which in-

deed even the political zeal, that he did not share, was too hearted to repel. Although generally detesting lectures on literature as superficial and vapid substitutes for quiet reading, and recitations as unreal mockeries of the true Drama, he sometimes attended the entertainments, composed of both, which Thelwall, in the palmy days of his prosperity, gave at his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, not on politics, which he had then forsaken for elocutionary science, though maintaining the principles of his youth, but partly on elocution, and partly on poetry and acting, into which he infused the fiery enthusiasm of his nature. Sometimes, indeed, his fervour animated his disquisitions on the philosophy of speech with greater warmth than he reserved for more attractive themes; the melted vowels were blended into a rainbow, or dispersed like fleecy clouds; and the theory of language was made interesting by the honesty and vigour of the speaker. Like all men who have been chiefly self-taught, he sometimes presented common-places as original discoveries, with an air which strangers mistook for quackery; but they were unjust; to the speaker these were the product of his own meditation, though familiar to many, and not rarely possessed the charm of originality in their freshness. Lamb at least, felt that it was good, among other companions of richer and more comprehensive intelligence, to have one friend who was undisturbed by misgiving either for himself or his cause; who enunciated wild paradox and worn-out common-place with equal confidence; and who was ready to sacrifice ease, fortune, fame—everything but speech, and, if it had been possible, even *that*—to the cause of truth or friendship.

William Hazlitt was, for many years, one of the

brightest and most constant ornaments of Lamb's parties;—linked to him in the firm bond of intellectual friendship—which remained unshaken in spite of some superficial differences, "short and far between," arising from Lamb's insensibility to Hazlitt's political animosities, and his adherence to Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, who shared them. Hazlitt in his boyhood had derived from his father that attachment to abstract truth for its own sake, and that inflexible determination to cherish it, which naturally predominated in the being of the minister of a small rural congregation, who cherished religious opinions adverse to those of the great body of his countrymen, and waged a spiritual warfare throughout his peaceful course. Thus disciplined, he was introduced to the friendship of youthful poets, in whom the dawn of the French Revolution had enkindled hope, and passion, and opinions tinctured with hope and passion, which he eagerly embraced; and when changes passed over the prospects of mankind, which induced them, in maturer years, to modify the doctrines they had taught, he resented these defections almost as personal wrongs, and, when his pen found scope, and his tongue utterance, wrote and spoke of them with such bitterness as can only spring from the depths of old affection. No writer, however, except Wilson, did such noble justice to the poetry of Wordsworth, when most despised, and to the genius of Coleridge, when most obscured; he cherished a true admiration for each in "the last recesses of the mind," and defended them with dogged resolution against the scorns and slights of the world. Still the superficial difference was, or seemed, too wide to admit of personal intercourse; and I do not think

that during the many years which elapsed between my introduction to Lamb, and Hazlitt's death, he ever met either of the poets at the rooms of the man they united in loving.

Although Mr. Hazlitt was thus staunch in his attachment to principles which he reverenced as true, he was by no means rigid in his mode of maintaining and illustrating them; but, on the contrary, frequently diminished the immediate effect of his reasonings by the prodigality and richness of the allusions with which he embossed them. He had as unquenchable a desire for truth as others have for wealth, or power, or fame; he pursued it with sturdy singleness of purpose; and enunciated it without favour or fear. But, besides that love of truth, that sincerity in pursuing it, and that boldness in telling it, he had also a fervent aspiration after the beautiful; a vivid sense of pleasure, and an intense consciousness of his own individual being, which sometimes produced obstacles to the current of speculation, by which it was broken into dazzling eddies or urged into devious windings. Acute, fervid, vigorous, as his mind was, it wanted the one great central power of Imagination, which brings all the other faculties into harmonious action; multiplies them into each other; makes truth visible in the forms of beauty, and substitutes intellectual vision for proof. Thus, in him, truth and beauty held divided empire. In him, the spirit was willing, but the flesh was *strong;* and, when these contend, it is not difficult to anticipate the result; "for the power of beauty shall sooner transform honesty from what it is into a bawd, than the person of honesty shall transform beauty into its likeness." This "sometime paradox" was vividly exemplified in Haz-

litt's personal history, his conversation, and his writings. To the solitudes of the country in which he mused on fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute," a temperament of unusual ardour had given an intense interest, akin to that with which Rousseau has animated and oppressed the details of his early years.

He had not then, nor did he find till long afterwards, power to embody his meditations and feelings in words. The consciousness of thoughts which he could not hope adequately to express, increased his natural reserve, and he turned for relief to the art of painting, in which he might silently realise his dreams of beauty, and repay the loveliness of nature by fixing some of its fleeting aspects in immortal tints. A few old prints from the old masters awakened the spirit of emulation within him; the sense of beauty became identified in his mind with that of glory and duration; while the peaceful labour he enjoyed calmed the tumult in his veins, and gave steadiness to his pure and distant aim. He pursued the art with an earnestness and patience which he vividly describes in his essay, "On the pleasure of Painting;" and to which he frequently reverted in the happiest moods of his conversation; and, although in this, his chosen pursuit, he failed, the passionate desire for success, and the long struggle to attain it, left deep traces in his mind, heightening his keen perception of external things, and mingling with all his speculations airy shapes and hues which he had vainly striven to transfer to canvas. A painter may acquire a fine insight into the nice distinctions of character,—he may copy manners in words as he does in colours,—but it may be apprehended that his course as a severe reasoner will be somewhat "troubled with thick-

coming fancies." And if the successful pursuit of art may thus disturb the process of abstract contemplation, how much more may an unsatisfied ambition ruffle it; bid the dark threads of thought glitter with radiant fancies unrealized, and clothe the diagrams of speculation with the fragments of picture which the mind cherishes the more fondly, because the hand refused to realize? What wonder, if, in the mind of an ardent youth, thus struggling in vain to give palpable existence to the shapes of loveliness which haunted him, "the homely beauty of the good old cause" should assume the fascinations not properly its own?

This association of beauty with reason diminished the immediate effect of Mr. Hazlitt's political essays, while it enhanced their permanent value. It was the fashion, in his lifetime, to denounce him as a sour Jacobin; but no description could be more unjust. Under the influence of some bitter feeling, or some wayward fancy, he occasionally poured out a furious invective against those whom he regarded as the enemies of liberty, or as apostates from her cause; but, in general, the force of his expostulation, or his reasoning, was diverted (unconsciously to himself) by figures and phantasies, by fine and quaint allusions, by quotations from his favourite authors, introduced with singular felicity, as respects the direct link of association, but tending, by their very beauty, to unnerve the mind of the reader, and substitute the sense of luxury for clear conviction, or noble anger. In some of his essays, where the reasoning is most cogent, every other sentence contains some exquisite passage from Shakespeare, or Fletcher, or Wordsworth, trailing after it a line of golden associations;

or some reference to a novel, over which we have a thousand times forgotten the wrongs of mankind; till, in the recurring shocks of pleasurable surprise, the main argument is forgotten. When, for example, he compares the position of certain political waverers to that of Clarissa Harlowe confronting the ravisher who would repeat his outrage, with the penknife pointed to her breast, and her eyes uplifted to Heaven, and describes them as having been, like her, trepanned into a house of ill-fame, near Pall Mall, and there defending their soiled virtue with their penknives; what reader, at the suggestion of the stupendous scene which the allusion directly revives, can think or care about the renegade of yesterday? Here, again, is felt the want of that Imagination, which brings all things into one, tinges all our thoughts and sympathies with one hue, and rejects every ornament which does not heighten or prolong the feeling which it seeks to embody.

Even when he retaliates on Southey for attacking his old co-patriots, the poetical associations which bitter remembrance suggests, almost neutralise the vituperation; he brings every "flower which sad embroidery wears to strew the laureate hearse," where ancient regards are interred; and merges all the censure of the changed politician in praise of the simple dignity and the generous labours of a singularly noble and unsullied life. So little does he regard the unity of sentiment in his compositions, that in his "Letter to Gifford," after a series of just and bitter retorts on his maligner as "the fine link which connects literature with the police," he takes a fancy to teach that "ultra-crepidarian critic" his own theory of the natural disinterestedness of the human mind, and de-

velops it, not in the dry, hard, mathematical style in which it was first enunciated, but "o'er informed" with the glow of sentiment, and terminating in an eloquent rhapsody. This latter portion of the letter is one of the noblest of his effusions, but it entirely destroys the first in the mind of the reader; for who, when thus contemplating the living wheels on which human benevolence is borne onwards in its triumphant career, and the spirit with which they are instinct, can think of the literary wasp which had settled for a moment upon them, and who had just before been mercilessly transfixed with minikin arrows?

But the most signal example of the influences which "the show of things" exercised over Mr. Hazlitt's mind was the setting up the Emperor Napoleon as his idol. He strove to justify this predilection to himself by referring it to the revolutionary origin of his hero, and the contempt with which he trampled upon the claims of legitimacy, and humbled the pride of kings. But if his "only love" thus sprung "from his only hate," it was not cherished in its blossom by antipathies. If there had been nothing in his mind which tended to aggrandisement and glory, and which would fain reconcile the principles of freedom with the lavish accumulation of power, he might have desired the triumph of young tyranny over legitimate thrones; but he would scarcely have watched its progress and its fall "like a lover and a child." His feeling for Bonaparte in exile was not a sentiment of respect for fallen greatness; not a desire to trace "the soul of goodness in things evil;" not a loathing of the treatment the Emperor received from "his cousin kings" in the day of adversity; but entire affection mingling with the current of the blood, and pervading the moral

and intellectual being. Nothing less than this strong attachment, at once personal and refined, would have enabled him to encounter the toil of collecting and arranging facts and dates for four volumes of narrative which constitute his "Life of Napoleon;"—a drudgery too abhorrent to his habits of mind as a thinker, to be sustained by any stimulus which the prospect of remuneration or the hope of applause could supply. It is not so much in the ingenious excuses which he discovers for the worst acts of his hero—offered even for the midnight execution of the Duke d'Enghien and the invasion of Spain—that the stamp of personal devotion is obvious, as in the graphic force with which he has delineated the short-lived splendours of the Imperial Court, and "the trivial fond records" he has gathered of every vestige of human feeling by which he could reconcile the Imperial Cynic to the species he scorned. The first two volumes of his work, although redeemed by scattered thoughts of true originality and depth, are often confused and spiritless; the characters of the principal revolutionists are drawn too much in the style of awkward, sprawling caricatures; but when the hero casts all his rivals into the distance, erects himself the individual enemy of England, consecrates his power by religious ceremonies, and defines it by the circle of a crown, the author's strength becomes concentrated; his narrative assumes an epic dignity and fervour; dallies with the flowers of usurped prerogative, and glows with "the long-resounding march and energy divine." How happy and proud is he to picture the meeting of the Emperor with the Pope, and the grandeurs of the coronation! How he grows wanton in celebrating the fêtes of the Tuileries, as "presenting all the ele-

gance of enchanted pageants," and laments them as "gone like a fairy revel!" How he "lives along the line" of Austerlitz, and rejoices in its thunder, and hails its setting sun, and exults in the minutest details of the subsequent meeting of the conquered sovereigns at the feet of the conqueror! How he expatiates on the fatal marriage with "the deadly Austrian" (as Mr. Cobbett justly called Maria Louisa), as though it were a chapter in romance, and sheds the grace of beauty on the imperial picture! How he kindles with martial ardour as he describes the preparations against Russia; musters the myriads of barbarians with a show of dramatic justice; and fondly lingers among the brief triumphs of Moskwa on the verge of the terrible catastrophe! The narrative of the disastrous expedition is, indeed, written with a master's hand; we see the "grand army" marching to its destruction through the immense perspective: the wild hordes flying before the terror of its "coming;" the barbaric magnificence of Moscow towering in the remote distance; and when we gaze upon the sacrificial conflagration of the Kremlin, we feel that it is worthy to become the funeral pile of the conqueror's glories. It is well for the readers of this splendid work, that there is more in it of the painter than of the metaphysician; that its style glows with the fervour of battle, or stiffens with the spoils of victory; yet we wonder that this monument to imperial grandeur should be raised from the dead level of jacobinism by an honest and profound thinker. The solution is, that although he was this, he was also more—that, in opinion, he was devoted to the cause of the people: but that, in feeling, he required some individual object of worship; that he selected Napoleon as one in whose

origin and career he might at once impersonate his principles and gratify his affections; and that he adhered to his own idea with heroic obstinacy, when the "child and champion of the Republic" openly sought to repress all feeling and thought, but such as he could cast in his own iron moulds, and scoffed at popular enthusiasm even while it bore him to the accomplishment of his loftiest desires.

Mr. Hazlitt had little inclination to talk or write about contemporary authors, and still less to read them. He was with difficulty persuaded to look into the Scotch novels, but when he did so, he found them old in substance though new in form, read them with as much avidity as the rest of the world, and expressed better than any one else what all the world felt about them. His hearty love of them, however, did not diminish, but aggravate his dislike of the political opinions so zealously and consistently maintained, of their great author: and yet the strength of his hatred towards that which was accidental and transitory only set off the unabated power of his regard for the great and the lasting. Coleridge and Wordsworth were not moderns to him, for they were the inspirers of his youth, which was his own antiquity, and the feelings which were the germ of their poetry had sunk deep into his heart. With the exception of the works of these, and of his friends Barry Cornwall and Sheridan Knowles, in whose successes he rejoiced, he held modern literature in slight esteem, and regarded the discoveries of science and the visions of optimism with an undazzled eye. His "large discourse of reason" looked not before, but after. He felt it a sacred duty, as a lover of genius and art, to defend the fame of the mighty dead. When the old painters were assailed

in "The Catalogue Raisonne of the British Institution," he was "touched with noble anger." All his own vain longings after the immortality of the works which were libelled,—all the tranquillity and beauty they had shed into his soul,—all his comprehension of the sympathy and delight of thousands, which, accumulating through long time, had attested their worth—were fused together to dazzle and subdue the daring critic who would disturb the judgment of ages. So, when a popular poet assailed the fame of Rousseau, seeking to reverse the decision of posterity on what that great though unhappy writer had achieved by suggesting the opinion of people of condition in his neighbourhood on the figure he made to their apprehensions while in the service of Madame de Warrens, he vindicated the prerogatives of genius with the true logic of passion. Few things irritated him more than the claims set up for the present generation to be wiser and better than those which have gone before it. He had no power of imagination to embrace the golden clouds which hung over the Future, but he rested and expatiated in the Past. To his apprehension human good did not appear a slender shoot of yesterday, like the beanstalk in the fairy tale, aspiring to the skies, and leading to an enchanted castle, but a huge growth of intertwisted fibres, grassing the earth by numberless roots of custom, habit, and affection, and bearing vestiges, of "a thousand storms, a thousand thunders."

When I first met Hazlitt, in the year 1815, he was staggering under the blow of Waterloo. The re-appearance of his imperial idol on the coast of France, and his triumphant march to Paris, like a fairy vision, had excited his admiration and sympathy to the

utmost pitch; and though in many respects sturdily English in feeling, he could scarcely forgive the valour of the conquerors; and bitterly resented the captivity of the Emperor in St. Helena, which followed it, as if he had sustained a personal wrong. On this subject only, he was "eaten up with passion;" on all others he was the fairest, the most candid of reasoners. His countenance was then handsome, but marked by a painful expression; his black hair, which had curled stiffly over his temples, had scarcely received its first tints of grey; his gait was awkward; his dress was neglected; and, in the company of strangers, his bashfulness was almost painful—but when, in the society of Lamb and one or two others, he talked on his favourite themes of old English books, or old Italian pictures, no one's conversation could be more delightful. The poets, from intercourse with whom he had drawn so much of his taste, and who had contributed to shed the noble infection of beauty through his reasoning faculties, had scarcely the opportunity of appreciating their progress. It was, in after years, by the fireside of "the Lambs," that his tongue was gradually loosened, and his passionate thoughts found appropriate words. There, his struggles to express the fine conceptions with which his mind was filled were encouraged by entire sympathy; there he began to stammer out his just and original conceptions of Chaucer and Spenser, and other English poets and prose writers, more talked of, though not better known, by their countrymen; there he was thoroughly understood and dexterously cheered by Miss Lamb, whose nice discernment of his first efforts in conversation were dwelt upon by him with affectionate gratitude, even when most out of humour with the

world. When he mastered his diffidence, he did not talk for effect, to dazzle, or surprise, or annoy, but with the most simple and honest desire to make his view of the subject in hand entirely apprehended by his hearer. There was sometimes an obvious struggle to do this to his own satisfaction; he seemed labouring to drag his thought to light from its deep lurking-place; and, with timid distrust of that power of expression which he had found so late in life, he often betrayed a fear lest he had failed to make himself understood, and recurred to the subject again and again, that he might be assured he had succeeded. With a certain doggedness of manner, he showed nothing pragmatical or exclusive; he never drove a principle to its utmost possible consequences but, like Locksley, "allowed for the wind." For some years previous to his death he observed an entire abstinence from fermented liquors, which he had once quaffed with the proper relish he had for all the good things of this life, but which he courageously resigned when he found the indulgence perilous to his health and faculties. The cheerfulness with which he made this sacrifice was one of the most amiable traits in his character. He had no censure for others, who, in the same dangers, were less wise or less resolute; nor did he think he had earned, by his own constancy, any right to intrude advice which he knew, if wanted, must be unavailing. Nor did he profess to be a convert to the general system of abstinence, which was advanced by one of his kindest and staunchest friends; he avowed that he yielded to necessity; and instead of avoiding the sight of that which he could no longer taste, he was seldom so happy as when he sat with friends at their wine, participating the sociality of the

time, and renewing his own past enjoyment in that of his companions, without regret and without envy. Like Dr. Johnson, he made himself poor amends for the loss of wine by drinking tea, not so largely, indeed, as the hero of Boswell, but at least of equal potency; for he might have challenged Mrs. Thrale and all her sex to make stronger tea than his own. In society, as in politics, he was no flincher. He loved "to hear the chimes at midnight," without considering them as a summons to rise. At these seasons, when in his happiest mood, he used to dwell on the conversational power of his friends, and live over again the delightful hours he had passed with them; repeat the pregnant puns that one had made; tell over again a story with which another had convulsed the room; or expatiate on the eloquence of a third; always best pleased when he could detect some talent which was unregarded by the world, and giving alike, to the celebrated and the unknown, due honour.

Mr. Hazlitt delivered three courses of lectures at the Surrey Institution, on "The English Poets;" on "The English Comic Writers," and on "The Age of Elizabeth," which Lamb (under protest against lectures in general) regularly attended, an earnest admirer, amidst crowds with whom the lecturer had "an imperfect sympathy." They consisted chiefly of Dissenters, who agreed with him in his hatred of Lord Castlereagh, and his love of religious freedom, but who "loved no plays;" of Quakers, who approved him as the earnest opponent of slavery and capital punishment, but who "heard no music;" of citizens, devoted to the main chance, who had a hankering after "the improvement of the mind;" but to whom his favourite doctrine of its natural disinterestedness

was a riddle; of a few enemies who came to sneer; and a few friends, who were eager to learn and to admire. The comparative insensibility of the bulk of his audience to his finest passages sometimes provoked him to awaken their attention by points which broke the train of his discourse; after which, he could make himself amends by some abrupt paradox which might set their prejudices on edge, and make them fancy they were shocked. He startled many of them at the onset, by observing, that, since Jacob's dream, "the heavens have gone farther off, and become astronomical;" a fine extravagance, which the ladies and gentlemen who had grown astronomical themselves under the preceding lecturer, felt called on to resent as an attack on their severer studies. When he read a well-known extract from Cowper, comparing a poor cottager with Voltaire, and had pronounced the line; "A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew," they broke into a joyous shout of self-gratulation, that they were so much wiser than the scornful Frenchman. When he passed by Mrs. Hannah More with observing that "she had written a great deal which he had never read," a voice gave expression to the general commiseration and surprise, by calling out "More pity for you!" They were confounded at his reading with more emphasis, perhaps, than discretion, Gay's epigrammatic lines on Sir Richard Blackstone, in which scriptural persons are too freely hitched into rhyme; but he went doggedly on to the end, and, by his perseverance, baffled those who, if he had acknowledged himself wrong, by stopping, would have visited him with an outburst of displeasure which he felt to be gathering. He once had a more edifying advantage over them. He was

enumerating the humanities which endeared Dr. Johnson to his mind, and at the close of an agreeable catalogue, mentioned, as last and noblest, "his carrying the poor victim of disease and dissipation on his back, through Fleet Street," at which a titter arose from some, who were struck by the picture, as ludicrous, and a murmur from others, who deemed the allusion unfit for ears polite: he paused for an instant, and then added, in his sturdiest and most impressive manner,—"an act which realizes the parable of the Good Samaritan;" at which his moral and his delicate hearers shrunk, rebuked into deep silence. He was not eloquent, in the true sense of the term; for his thoughts were too weighty to be moved along by the shallow stream of feeling which an evening's excitement can rouse. He wrote all his lectures, and read them as they were written; but his deep voice and earnest manner suited his matter well. He seemed to dig into his subject, and not in vain. In delivering his longer quotations, he had scarcely continuity enough for the versification of Shakespeare and Milton, "with linked sweetness long drawn out;" but he gave Pope's brilliant satire and delightful compliments, which are usually complete within the couplet, with an elegance and point which the poet himself, could he have heard, would have felt as indicating their highest praise.

Mr. Hazlitt, having suffered for many years from derangement of the digestive organs, for which perhaps a moderate use of fermented liquors would have been preferable to abstinence, solaced only by the intense tincture of tea in which he found refuge, worn out at last, died on 18th Sept., 1830, at the age of fifty-two. Lamb frequently visited him during his

sufferings, which were not, as has been erroneously suggested, aggravated by the want of needful comforts; for although his careless habits had left no provision for sickness, his friends gladly acknowledged, by their united aid, the deep intellectual obligations due to the great thinker. In a moment of acute pain, when the needless apprehension for the future rushed upon him, he dictated a brief and peremptory letter to the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, requiring a considerable remittance, to which he had no claim but that of former remunerated services, which the friend, who obeyed his bidding, feared might excite displeasure; but he mistook Francis Jeffrey; the sum demanded was received by return of post, with the most anxious wishes for Hazlitt's recovery—just too late for him to understand his error. Lamb joined a few friends in attending his funeral in the churchyard of St. Anne's, Soho, where he was interred, and felt his loss—not so violently at the time, as mournfully in the frequent recurrence of the sense that a chief source of intellectual pleasure was stopped. His personal frailties are nothing to us now; his thoughts survive; in them we have his better part entire, and in them must be traced his true history. The real events of his life are not to be traced in its external changes; as his engagement by the *Morning Chronicle*, or his transfer of his services to the *Times*, or his introduction to the *Edinburgh Review;* but in the progress and development of his fine understanding as nurtured and checked and swayed by his affections. His warfare was within; its spoils are ours!

One of the soundest and most elegant scholars whom the school of Christ's Hospital ever produced, Mr. Thomas Barnes, was a frequent guest at Lamb's

chambers in the Temple; and though the responsibilities he undertook, before Lamb quitted that, his happiest abode, prevented him from visiting often at Great Russell Street, at Islington, or Enfield, he was always ready to assist by the kind word of the powerful journal in which he became most potent, the expanding reputation of his schoolmate and friend. After establishing a high social and intellectual character at Cambridge, he had entered the legal profession as a special pleader, but was prevented from applying the needful devotion to that laborious pursuit by violent rheumatic affections, which he solaced by writing critiques and essays of rare merit. So shattered did he appear in health, that when his friends learned that he had accepted the editorship of the *Times* newspaper, they almost shuddered at the attempt as suicidal, and anticipated a speedy ruin to his constitution from the pressure of constant labour and anxiety, on the least healthful hours of toil. But he had judged better than they of his own physical and intellectual resources, and the mode in which the grave responsibility and constant exertion of his office would affect both; for the regular effort consolidated his feverish strength, gave evenness and tranquillity to a life of serious exertion, and supplied, for many years, power equal to the perpetual demand; affording a striking example how, when finely attuned, the mind can influence the body to its uses. The facile adaptation of his intellect to his new duties was scarcely less remarkable than the mastery it achieved over his desultory habits and physical infirmities; for, until then, it had seemed more refined than vigorous — more elegant than weighty — too fastidious to endure the supervision and arrangement of innumerable reports, paragraphs,

and essays; but, while a scholarly grace was shed by him through all he wrote or moulded, the needful vigour was never wanting to the high office of superintending the great daily miracle; to the discipline of its various contributors; or to the composition of articles which he was always ready, on the instant of emergency, to supply.

Mr. Barnes, linked by school associations with Leigh Hunt, filled the theatrical department of criticism in the *Examiner* during the period when the Editor's imprisonment for alleged libel on the Prince Regent precluded his attendance on the theatres. It was no easy office of friendship to supply the place of Hunt in the department of criticism, he may be almost said to have invented; but Mr. Barnes, though in a different style, well sustained the attractions of the "Theatrical Examiner." Fortunately the appearance of Mr. Kean during this interval enabled him to gratify the profound enthusiasm of his nature, without doing violence to the fastidious taste to which it was usually subjected. He perceived at once the vivid energy of the new actor; understood his faults to be better than the excellences of ordinary aspirants; and hailed him with the most generous praise—the more valuable as it proceeded from one rarely induced to render applause, and never yielding it except on the conviction of true excellence. Hazlitt, who contributed theatrical criticism, at the same time, to the *Morning Chronicle*, and who astounded the tame mediocrity of Mr. Perry's subordinates by his earnest eulogy, and Barnes, had the satisfaction of first appreciating this unfriended performer, and, while many were offended by the daring novelty of his style, and more stood aloof with fashionable indifference from a deserted

theatre, of awakening that spirit which retrieved the fortunes of Old Drury—which revived, for a brilliant interval, the interest of the English stage, and which bore the actor on a tide of intoxicating success that "knew no retiring ebb" till it was unhappily checked by his own lamentable frailties.[1]

The manners of Mr. Barnes, though extremely courteous, were so reserved as to seem cold to strangers; but they were changed, as by magic, by

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[1] As the essays of Mr. Barnes have never been collected, I take leave to present to the reader the conclusion of his article in the *Examiner* of February 27th, 1814, on the first appearance of Mr. Kean in Richard:—

"In the heroic parts, he animated every spectator with his own feelings; when he exclaimed 'that a thousand hearts were swelling in his bosom,' the house shouted to express their accordance to a truth so nobly exemplified by the energy of his voice, by the grandeur of his mien. His death-scene was the grandest conception, and executed in the most impressive manner; it was a piece of noble poetry, expressed by action instead of language. He fights desperately: he is disarmed and exhausted of all bodily strength: he disdains to fall, and his strong volition keeps him standing: he fixes that head, full of intellectual and heroic power, directly on the enemy: he bears up his chest with an expression which seems swelling with more than human spirit: he holds his uplifted arm, in calm but dreadful defiance of his conqueror. But he is but man, and he falls after this sublime effort senseless to the ground. We have felt our eyes gush on reading a passage of exquisite poetry. We have been ready to leap at sight of a noble picture, but we never felt stronger emotion, more overpowering sensations, than were kindled by the novel sublimity of this catastrophe. In matters of mere taste, there will be a difference of opinion; but here there was no room to doubt, no reason could be imprudent enough to hesitate. Every heart beat an echo responsive to this call of elevated nature, and yearned with fondness towards the man who, while he excited admiration for himself made also his admirers glow with a warmth of conscious superiority, because they were able to appreciate such an exalted degree of excellence."

the contemplation of moral or intellectual beauty, awakened in a small circle. I well remember him, late one evening, in the year 1816, when only two or three friends remained with Lamb and his sister, long after "we had heard the chimes at midnight," holding inveterate but delighted controversy with Lamb, respecting the tragic power of Dante as compared with that of Shakespeare. Dante was scarcely known to Lamb; for he was unable to read the original, and Cary's noble translation was not then known to him; and Barnes aspired to the glory of affording him a glimpse of a kindred greatness in the mighty Italian with that which he had conceived incapable of human rivalry. The face of the advocate of Dante, heavy when in repose, grew bright with earnest admiration as he quoted images, sentiments, dialogues, against Lamb, who had taken his own immortal stand on Lear, and urged the supremacy of the child-changed father against all the possible Ugolinos of the world. Some reference having been made by Lamb to his own exposition of Lear, which had been recently published in a magazine, edited by Leigh Hunt, under the title of *The Reflector*, touched another and a tenderer string of feeling, turned a little the course of his enthusiasm the more to inflame it, and brought out a burst of affectionate admiration for his friend, then scarcely known to the world, which was the more striking for its contrast with his usually sedate demeanour. I think I see him now, leaning forward upon the little table on which the candles were just expiring in their sockets, his fists clenched, his eyes flashing, and his face bathed in perspiration, exclaiming to Lamb, "And do I not know, my boy, that you have written about Shakespeare, and Shakespeare's own Lear, finer than

any one ever did in the world, and won't I let the world know it?" He was right; there is no criticism in the world more worthy of the genius it estimates than that little passage referred to on Lear; few felt it then like Barnes; thousands have read it since, here, and tens of thousands in America; and have felt as he did; and will answer for the truth of that excited hour.

Mr. Barnes combined singular acuteness of understanding with remarkable simplicity of character. If he was skilful in finding out those who duped others, he made some amends to the world of sharpers by being abundantly duped himself. He might caution the public to be on their guard against impostors of every kind, but his heart was open to every species of delusion which came in the shape of misery. Poles —real and theatrical—refugees, pretenders of all kinds, found their way to the *Times* inner office, and though the inexorable editor excluded their lucubrations from the precious space of its columns, he rarely omitted to make them amends by large contributions from his purse. The intimate acquaintance with all the varieties of life forced on him by his position in the midst of a moving epitome of the world, which vividly reflected them all, failed to teach him distrust or discretion. He was a child in the centre of the most feverish agitations; a dupe in the midst of the quickest apprehensions; and while, with unbending pride, he repelled the slightest interference with his high functions from the greatest quarters, he was open to every tale from the lowest which could win from him personal aid. Rarely as he was seen in his later years in Lamb's circle, he is indestructibly associated with it in the recollection of the few survivors of its elder days; and they will lament with me that the influ-

ences for good which he shed largely on all the departments of busy life, should have necessarily left behind them such slender memorials of one of the kindest, the wisest, and the best of men who have ever enjoyed signal opportunities of moulding public opinion, and who have turned them to the noblest and the purest uses.

Among Lamb's early acquaintances and constant admirers was an artist whose chequered career and melancholy death gave an interest to the recollections with which he is linked independent of that which belongs to his pictures—Benjamin Robert Haydon. The ruling misfortune of his life was somewhat akin to that disproportion in Hazlitt's mind to which I have adverted, but productive in his case of more disastrous results—the possession of two different faculties not harmonized into one, and struggling for mastery—in that disarrangement of the faculties in which the unproductive talent becomes not a mere negative, but neutralises the other, and even turns its good into evil. Haydon, the son of a respectable tradesman at Plymouth, was endowed with two capacities, either of which exclusively cultivated with the energy of his disposition, might have led to fortune —the genius of a painter, and the passionate logic of a controversialist; talents scarcely capable of being blended in harmonious action except under the auspices of prosperity such as should satisfy the artist by fame, and appease the literary combatant by triumph.

The combination of a turbulent vivacity of mind with a fine aptitude for the most serene of arts was rendered more infelicitous by the circumstances of the young painter's early career. He was destined painfully to work his way at once through the lower

elements of his art and the difficulties of adverse fortune; and though by indomitable courage and unwearied industry he became master of anatomic science, of colouring, and of perspective, and achieved a position in which his efforts might be fairly presented to the notice of the world, his impetuous temperament was yet further ruffled by the arduous and complicated struggle. With boundless intellectual ambition, he sought to excel in the loftiest department of his art; and undertook the double responsibility of painting great pictures and of creating the taste which should appreciate, and enforcing the patronage which should reward them.

The patronage of high art, not then adopted by the Government, and far beyond the means of individuals of the middle class, necessarily appertained to a few members of the aristocracy, who alone could encourage and remunerate the painters of history. Although the beginning of Mr. Haydon's career was not uncheered by aristocratic favour, the contrast between the greatness of his own conceptions and the humility of the course which prudence suggested as necessary to obtain for himself the means of developing them on canvas, fevered his nature, which, ardent in gratitude for the appreciation and assistance of the wealthy to a degree which might even be mistaken for servility, was also impatient of the general indifference to the cause of which he sought to be, not only the ornament, but unhappily for him, also the champion. Alas! he there "perceived a divided duty." Had he been contented silently to paint—to endure obscurity and privation for a while, gradually to mature his powers of execution and soften the rigour of his style and of his virtue, he might have achieved works, not

only as vast in outline and as beautiful in portions as those which he exhibited, but so harmonious in their excellences as to charm away opposition, and ensure speedy reputation, moderate fortune, and lasting fame. But he resolved to battle for that which he believed to be "the right," he rushed into a life-long contest with the Royal Academy; frequently suspended the gentle labours of the pencil for the vehement use of the pen; and thus gave to his course an air of defiance which prevented the calm appreciation of his nobler works, and increased the mischief by reaction. Indignant of the scorns "that patient merit of the unworthy takes," he sometimes fancied scorns which *impatient* merit in return imputes to the worthy; and thus instead of enjoying the most tranquil of lives (which a painter's should be), led one of the most animated, restless, and broken. The necessary consequence of this disproportion was a series of pecuniary embarrassments, the direct result of his struggle with fortune; a succession of feverish triumphs and disappointments, the fruits of his contest with power; and worse perhaps than either, the frequent diversion of his own genius from its natural course, and the hurried and imperfect development of its most majestic conceptions. To paint as finely as he sometimes did in the ruffled pauses of his passionate controversy, and amidst the terrors of impending want, was to display large innate resources of skill and high energy of mind; but how much more unquestionable fame might he have attained if his disposition had permitted him to be content with charming the world of art, instead of attempting also to instruct or reform it!

Mr. Haydon's course, though thus troubled, was

one of constant animation, and illustrated by hours of triumph, the more radiant because they were snatched from adverse fortune and a reluctant people. The exhibition of a single picture by an artist at war with the Academy which exhibited a thousand pictures at the same price—creating a sensation not only among artists and patrons of art, but among the most secluded literary circles—and engaging the highest powers of criticism—was, itself, a splendid occurrence in life;—and, twice at least, in the instance of the Entry into Jerusalem, and the Lazarus, was crowned with signal success. It was a proud moment for the daring painter, when, at the opening of the first of these Exhibitions, while the crowd of visitors, distinguished in rank or talent, stood doubting whether in the countenance of the chief figure the daring attempt to present an aspect differing from that which had enkindled the devotion of ages—to mingle the human with the Divine, resolution with sweetness, dignified composure with the anticipation of mighty suffering —had not failed, Mrs. Siddons walked slowly up to the centre of the room, surveyed it in silence for a minute or two, and then ejaculated, in her deep, low, thrilling voice, "It is perfect!" quelled all opposition, and removed the doubt, from his own mind at least, for ever.

Although the great body of artists to whose corporate power Mr. Haydon was so passionately opposed, naturally stood aside from his path, it was cheered by the attention and often by the applause of the chief literary spirits of the age, who were attracted by a fierce intellectual struggle. Sir Walter Scott, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Godwin, Shelley, Hunt, Coleridge, Lamb, Keats,—and many young writers for periodical works, in the freshness of unhacknied authorship—

took an interest in a course so gallant though so troublous, which excited their sympathy yet did not force them to the irksome duty of unqualified praise. Almost in the outset of his career, Wordsworth addressed to him a sonnet, in heroic strain, associating the artist's calling with his own; making common cause with him, "while the whole world seems adverse to desert;" admonishing him "still to be strenuous for the bright reward, and in the soul admit of no decay;" and, long after, when the poet had, by a wiser perseverance, gradually created the taste which appreciated his works, he celebrated, in another sonnet, the fine autumnal conception in the picture of Napoleon on the rock of St. Helena, with his back to the spectator, contemplating the blank sea, left desolate by the sunken sun. The Conqueror of Napoleon also recognised the artist's claims, and supplied him with another great subject in the contemplation of the solitude of Waterloo by its hero, ten years after the victory.

Mr. Haydon's vividness of mind burst out in his conversation, which, though somewhat broken and rugged, like his career, had also, like that, a vein of beauty streaking it. Having associated with most of the remarkable persons of his time, and seen strange varieties of "many-coloured life"—gifted with a rapid perception of character and a painter's eye for effect,—he was able to hit off, with startling facility, sketches in words which lived before the hearer. His anxieties and sorrows did not destroy the buoyancy of his spirits or rob the convivial moment of its prosperity; so that he struggled, and toiled, and laughed, and triumphed, and failed, and hoped on, till the waning of life approached and found him still in opposition to

the world, and far from the threshold of fortune. The object of his literary exertions was partially attained; the national attention had been directed to high art; but he did not personally share in the benefits he had greatly contributed to win. Even his cartoon of the Curse in Paradise failed to obtain a prize when he entered the arena with unfledged youths for competitors; and the desertion of the exhibition of his two pictures of Aristides and Nero, at the Egyptian Hall, by the public, for the neighbouring exposure of the clever manikin, General Tom Thumb, quite vanquished him. It was indeed a melancholy contrast:—the unending succession of bright crowds thronging the levees of the small abortion, and the dim and dusty room in which the two latest historical pictures of the veteran hung for hours without a visitor. Opposition, abuse, even neglect he could have borne, but the sense of ridicule involved in such a juxta-position drove him to despair. No one who knew him ever apprehended from his disasters such a catastrophe as that which closed them. He had always cherished a belief in the religion of our Church, and avowed it among scoffing unbelievers; and that belief he asserted even in the wild fragments he penned in his last terrible hour. His friends thought that even the sense of the injustice of the world would have contributed with his undimmed consciousness of his own powers to enable him to endure. In his domestic relations also he was happy, blessed in the affection of a wife of great beauty and equal discretion, who, by gentler temper and serener wisdom than his own, had assisted and soothed him in all his anxieties and griefs, and whose image was so identified in his mind with the beautiful as to impress

its character on all the forms of female loveliness he had created. Those who knew him best feel the strongest assurance, that notwithstanding the appearances of preparation which attended his extraordinary suicide, his mind was shattered to pieces—all distorted and broken—with only one feeling left entire, the perversion of which led to the deed, a hope to awaken sympathy in death for those whom living he could not shelter. The last hurried lines he wrote, entitled "Haydon's last Thoughts," consisted of a fevered comparison between the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon, in which he seemed to wish to repair some supposed injustice which in speech or writing he had done to the Conqueror. It was inclosed in a letter addressed to three friends, written in the hour of his death, and containing sad fragmental memorials of those passionate hopes, fierce struggles, and bitter disappointments which brought him through distraction to the grave!

A visit of Coleridge was always regarded by Lamb, as an opportunity to afford a rare gratification to a few friends, who, he knew, would prize it; and I well remember the flush of prideful pleasure which came over his face as he would hurry, on his way to the India House, into the office in which I was a pupil, and stammer out the welcome invitation for the evening. This was true self-sacrifice; for Lamb would have infinitely preferred having his inspired friend to himself and his sister, for a brief renewal of the old Salutation delights; but, I believe, he never permitted himself to enjoy this exclusive treat. The pleasure he conferred was great; for of all celebrated persons I ever saw, Coleridge alone surpassed the expectation created by his writings; for he not only was, but

appeared to be, greater than the noblest things he had written.

Lamb used to speak, sometimes with a moistened eye and quivering lip, of Coleridge when young, and wish that we could have seen him in the spring-time of his genius, at a supper in the little sanded parlour of the old Salutation hostel. The promise of those days was never realized, by the execution of any of the mighty works he planned; but the very failure gave a sort of mournful interest to the "large discourse, looking before and after," to which we were enchanted listeners; to the wisdom which lives only in our memories, and must perish with them.

From Coleridge's early works, some notion may be gleaned of what he *was;* when the steep ascent of fame rose directly before him, while he might loiter to dally with the expectation of its summit, without ignobly shrinking from its labours. His endowments at that time—the close of the last century—when literature had faded into a fashion of poor language, must have seemed, to a mind and heart like Lamb's, no less than miraculous.

A rich store of classical knowledge—a sense of the beautiful, almost verging on the effeminate—a facile power of melody, varying from the solemn stops of the organ to a bird-like flutter of airy sound—the glorious faculty of poetic hope, exerted on human prospects, and presenting its results with the vividness of prophecy; a power of imaginative reasoning which peopled the nearer ground of contemplation with thoughts

> "All plumed like ostriches, like eagles bathed,
> As full of spirit as the month of May,
> And gorgeous as the sun at Midsummer,"

endowed the author of "The Ancient Mariner," and "Christabel." Thus gifted, he glided from youth into manhood, as a fairy voyager on a summer sea, to eddy round and round in dazzling circles, and to make little progress, at last, towards any of those thousand mountain summits which, glorified by aërial tints, rose before him at the extreme verge of the vast horizon of his genius. "The Ancient Mariner," printed with the "Lyrical Ballads," one of his earliest works, is still his finest poem—at once the most vigorous in design and the most chaste in execution—developing the intensest human affection, amidst the wildest scenery of a poet's dream. Nothing was too bright to hope from such a dawn. The mind of Coleridge seemed the harbinger of the golden years his enthusiasm predicted and painted;—of those days of peace on earth and good will among men, which the best and greatest minds have rejoiced to anticipate—and the earnest belief in which is better than all frivolous enjoyments, all worldly wisdom, all worldly success. And if the noontide of his genius did not fulfil his youth's promise of manly vigour, nor the setting of his earthly life honour it by an answering serenity of greatness—they still have left us abundant reason to be grateful that the glorious fragments of his mighty and imperfect being were ours. Cloud after cloud of German metaphysics rolled before his imagination—which it had power to irradiate with fantastic beauty, and to break into a thousand shifting forms of grandeur, though not to conquer; mist after mist ascended from those streams where earth and sky should have blended in one imagery, and were turned by its obscured glory to radiant haze; indulgence in the fearful luxury of that talismanic drug, which opens

glittering scenes of fantastic beauty on the waking soul to leave it in arid desolation, too often veiled it in partial eclipse, and blended fitful light with melancholy blackness over its vast domain; but the great central light remained unquenched, and cast its gleams through every department of human knowledge. A boundless capacity to receive and retain intellectual treasure made him the possessor of vaster stores of lore, classical, antiquarian, historical, biblical, and miscellaneous, than were ever vouchsafed, at least in our time, to a mortal being; goodly structures of divine philosophy rose before him like exhalations on the table-land of that his prodigious knowledge; but, alas! there was a deficiency of the power of voluntary action which would have left him unable to embody the shapes of a shepherd's dreams, and made him feeble as an infant before the overpowering majesty of his own! Hence his literary life became one splendid and sad prospectus—resembling only the portal of a mighty temple which it was forbidden us to enter—but whence strains of rich music issuing "took the prisoned soul and lapped it in Elysium," and fragments of ocular wisdom startled the thought they could not satisfy.

Hence the riches of his mind were developed, not in writing, but in his speech—conversation I can scarcely call it—which no one who once heard can ever forget. Unable to work in solitude, he sought the gentle stimulus of social admiration, and under its influence poured forth, without stint, the marvellous resources of a mind rich in the spoils of time—richer—richer far in its own glorious imagination and delicate fancy! There was a noble prodigality in these outpourings; a generous disdain of self; an

earnest desire to scatter abroad the seeds of wisdom and beauty, to take root wherever they might fall, and spring up without bearing his name or impress, which might remind the listener of the first days of poetry before it came to be individualised by the press, when the Homeric rhapsodist wandered through new-born cities and scattered hovels, flashing upon the minds of the wondering audience the bright train of heroic shapes, the series of godlike exploits, and sought no record more enduring than the fleshy tablets of his hearers' hearts; no memory but that of genial tradition; when copyright did not ascertain the reciter's property, nor marble at once perpetuate and shed chillness on his fame—

> "His bounty was as boundless as the sea,
> His love as deep."

Like the ocean, in all its variety of gentle moods, his discourse perpetually ebbed and flowed,—nothing in it angular, nothing of set purpose, but now trembling as the voice of divine philosophy, "not harsh nor crabbed, as dull fools suppose, but musical as is Apollo's lute," was wafted over the summer wave; now glistening in long line of light over some obscure subject, like the path of moonlight on the black water; and, if ever receding from the shore, driven by some sudden gust of inspiration, disclosing the treasures of the deep, like the rich strond in Spenser, "far sunken in their sunless treasuries," to be covered anon by the foam of the same immortal tide. The benignity of his manner befitted the beauty of his disquisitions; his voice rose from the gentlest pitch of conversation to the height of impassioned eloquence without effort, as his language expanded from some common topic of the day to the loftiest abstractions; ascending by a

winding track of spiral glory to the highest truths which the naked eye could discern, and suggesting starry regions, beyond, which his own telescopic gaze might possibly decipher. If his entranced hearers often were unable to perceive the bearings of his argument—too mighty for any grasp but his own—and sometimes reaching beyond his own—they understood "a *beauty* in the words, if not the words;" and a wisdom and piety in the illustrations, even when unable to connect them with the idea which he desired to illustrate. If an entire scheme of moral philosophy was never developed by him either in speaking or writing, all the parts were great: vast biblical knowledge, though sometimes eddying in splendid conjecture, was always employed with pious reverence; the morality suggested was at once elevated and genial; the charity hoped all things; and the mighty imaginative reasoner seemed almost to realize the condition suggested by the great Apostle, "that he understood all mysteries and all knowledge, and spake with the tongues both of men and angels!"

After Coleridge had found his last earthly refuge, under the wise and generous care of Mr. Gilman, at Highgate, he rarely visited Lamb, and my opportunities of observing him ceased. From those who were more favoured, as well as from the fragments I have seen of his last effusions, I know that, amidst suffering and weakness, his mighty mind concentrated its energies on the highest subjects which had ever kindled them; that the speculations, which sometimes seemed like paradox, because their extent was too vast to be comprehended in a single grasp of intellectual vision, were informed by a serener wisdom; that his perceptions of the central truth became more un-

divided, and his piety more profound and humble. His love for Charles and Mary Lamb continued, to the last, one of the strongest of his human affections—of which, by the kindness of a friend,[1] I possess an affecting memorial under his hand, written in the margin of a volume of his "Sibylline Leaves," which—after his life-long habit—he has enriched by manuscript annotations. The poem, beside which it is inscribed, is entitled "The Lime Tree Bower my Prison," composed by the poet in June, 1796, when Charles and Mary Lamb, who were visiting at his cottage near Bristol, had left him for a walk, which an accidental lameness prevented him from sharing. The visitors are not indicated by the poem, except that Charles is designated by the epithet, against which he jestingly remonstrated, as "gentle-hearted Charles;" and is represented as "winning his way, with sad and patient soul, through evil and pain, and strange calamity."[2]

Against the title is written as follows:—

CH. & MARY LAMB,
dear to my heart, yea,
as it were, *my heart*,
S. T. C. Æt. 63. 1834.
1797
1834.
—
37 years!

[1] Mr. Richard Welsh, of Reading, editor of the *Berkshire Chronicle*—one of the ablest productions of the Conservative Periodical Press.

[2] The whole passage is worth quoting here:—

"Yes, they wander on
In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast lived
And hungered after Nature many a year
In the great city pent, winning thy way

This memorandum, which is penned with remarkable neatness, must have been made in Coleridge's last illness, as he suffered acutely for several months before he died, in July of this same year, 1834. What a space did that thirty-seven years of fond regard for the brother and sister occupy in a mind like Coleridge's, peopled with immortal thoughts which might multiply in the true time, dialled in heaven, its minutes into years!

These friends of Lamb's whom I have ventured to sketch in companionship with him, and Southey also, whom I only once saw, are all gone;—and others of less note in the world's eye have followed them. Among those of the old set who are gone, is Manning[1],

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With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain,
And strange calamity . . . Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
No plot so narrow be, but Nature there;
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty! *and sometime*
'Tis well to be bereft of promised good,
That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share.
My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook
Beats its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blest it! deeming its black wing
(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light,)
Had crossed the mighty orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing, or, when all was still,
Flew croaking o'er thy head, *and had a charm*
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles! *to whom*
No sound is dissonant that tells of life."—F.

[1] Manning died Queen's Serjeant in 1866. Lamb told Mr. C. Robinson that he thought him "the most wonderful man of his acquaintance."—F.

perhaps, next to Coleridge, the dearest of them, whom Lamb used to speak of as marvellous in a *tête-à-tête*, but who, in company, seemed only a courteous gentleman, more disposed to listen than to talk. In good old age departed Admiral Burney, frank-hearted voyager with Captain Cook round the world, who seemed to unite our society with the circle over which Dr. Johnson reigned; who used to tell of school-days under the tutelage of Eugene Aram; how he remembered the gentle usher pacing the play-ground arm-in-arm with some one of the elder boys, and seeking relief from the unsuspected burthen of his conscience by talking of strange murders, and how he, a child, had shuddered at the handcuffs on his teacher's hands when taken away in the post-chaise to prison;—the Admiral being himself the centre of a little circle which his sister, the famous authoress of "Evelina," "Cecilia," and "Camilla," sometimes graced. John Lamb, the jovial and burly, who dared to argue with Hazlitt on questions of art; Barron Field, who with veneration enough to feel all the despised greatness of Wordsworth, had a sparkling vivacity, and, connected with Lamb by the link of Christ's Hospital associations, shared largely in his regard; Rickman, the sturdiest of jovial companions, severe in the discipline of whist as at the table of the House of Commons, of which he was the principal clerk; and Alsager, so calm, so bland, so considerate—all are gone. These were all Temple guests—friends of Lamb's early days; but the companions of a later time, who first met in Great Russell Street, or Dalston, or Islington, or Enfield, have been wofully thinned; Allan Cunningham, stalwart of form and stout of heart and verse, a ruder Burns; Cary, Lamb's

"pleasantest of clergymen," whose sweetness of disposition and manner would have prevented a stranger from guessing that he was the poet who had rendered the adamantine poetry of Dante into English with kindred power; Hood, so grave and sad and silent, that you were astonished to recognise in him the outpourer of a thousand wild fancies, the detector of the inmost springs of pathos, and the powerful vindicator of poverty and toil before the hearts of the prosperous; the Reverend Edward Irving, who, after fulfilling an old prophecy he made in Scotland to Hazlitt, that he would astonish and shake the world by his preaching, sat humbly at the feet of Coleridge to listen to wisdom,—all are gone; the forms of others associated with Lamb's circle by more accidental links (also dead) come thronging on the memory from the mist of years—Alas; it is easier to count those that are left of the old familiar faces!

A short time only before Lamb's fatal illness, he yielded to my urgent importunity, and met a small party of his friends at dinner at my house, where we had provided for him some of the few articles of food which now seemed to hit his fancy, and among them the hare, which had supplanted pig in his just esteem, with the hope of exciting his very delicate appetite. We were not disappointed; he ate with a relish not usual with him of late years, and passed the evening in his happiest mood. Among the four or five who met him on this occasion, the last on which I saw him in health, were his old friends Mr. Barron Field, Mr. Procter, and Mr. Forster, the author of the "Lives of Eminent English Statesmen," a friend of comparatively recent date, but one with whom Lamb found himself as much at home as if he had known him for

years. Mr. Field in a short but excellent memoir of Lamb, in the "Annual Biography and Obituary" of 1836, has brought this evening vividly to recollection; and I have a melancholy satisfaction in quoting a passage from it as he has recorded it. After justly eulogising Lamb's sense of "The Virtue of Suppression in Writing," Mr. Field proceeds:—

"We remember, at the very last supper we ate with him, he quoted a passage from Prior's 'Henry and Emma,' illustrative of this discipline; and yet he said he loved Prior as much as any man, but that his 'Henry and Emma' was a vapid paraphrase of the old poem of 'The Nutbrowne Mayde.' For example, at the *dénouement* of the ballad Prior makes Henry rant out to his devoted Emma—

> 'In me behold the potent Edgar's heir,
> Illustrious Earl; him terrible in war.
> Let Loire confess, for she has felt his sword,
> And trembling fled before the British lord.'

And so on for a dozen couplets, heroic, as they are called. And then Mr. Lamb made us mark the modest simplicity with which the noble youth discloses himself to his mistress in the old poem:—

> 'Now, understand,
> To Westmoreland,
> *Which is my heritage,*'
> (in a parenthesis, as it were,)
> 'I will you bring,
> And with a ring,

---

[1] In confirmation, the reader may be referred to the cordial and affectionate letters addressed to Mr. Forster, then a young *Litterateur*, which will be found in his correspondence. To this friend he presented a collection of his essays, cut out from the various magazines in which they had appeared, with his MS. alterations, and characteristically labelled, "TAG RAG AND BOB TAIL."—**F.**

By way of marriage,
I will you take,
And lady make,
As shortly as I can.
So have you won
An Earle's son,
And not a banish'd man.

"How he loved these old rhymes, and with what justice!"

The following little note has a mournful interest, as Lamb's last scrap of writing. It is dated on the very day on which erysipelas followed the accident, apparently trifling, which, five days after, terminated in his death. It is addressed to the wife of his oldest surviving friend:—"Dear Mrs. Dyer," he wrote on Dec. 22nd, 1834, "I am very uneasy about a *Book* which I either have lost or left at your house on Thursday. It was the book I went out to fetch from Miss Buffam's, while the tripe was frying. It is called 'Phillips's Theatrum Poetarum,' but it is an English book. I think I left it in the parlour. It is Mr. Cary's book, and I would not lose it for the world. Pray, if you find it, book it at the Swan, Snow Hill, by an Edmonton stage immediately, directed to Mr. Lamb, Church Street, Edmonton, or write to say you cannot find it. If it is lost, I shall never like tripe again. With kindest love to Mr. Dyer and all,—C. LAMB.[1]

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[1] Shortly before his death, Lamb had borrowed of Mr. Cary, Phillips's "Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum," which, when returned by Mr. Moxon, after the event, was found with the leaf folded down at the account of Sir Philip Sydney. Its receipt was acknowledged by the following lines:—

"So should it be, my gentle friend
Thy leaf last closed at Sydney's end.

A few days before this letter was written an accident befell Mr. Lamb, which seemed trifling at first, but which terminated in a fatal issue. In taking his daily morning walk on the London road as far as the inn where John Gilpin's ride is pictured, he stumbled against a stone, fell, and slightly injured his face.[1] The wounds seemed healing, when erysipelas in the head came on, and he sunk beneath the disease, happily without pain. On Friday evening Mr. Ryle, of the India House, who had been appointed co-executor with me of his will some years before, called on me, and informed me that he was in danger. I went over to Edmonton on the following morning, and found

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Thou too, like Sydney, wouldst have given,
The water, thirsting and near heaven;
Nay, were it wine, fill'd to the brim,
Thou hadst looked hard, but given, like him.

And art thou mingled then among
Those famous sons of ancient song?
And do they gather round, and praise
Thy relish of their nobler lays?
Waxing in mirth to hear thee tell
With what strange mortals thou didst dwell;
At thy quaint sallies more delighted,
Than any's long among them lighted!

'Tis done; and thou hast join'd a crew,
To whom thy soul was justly due;
And yet I think, where'er thou be,
They'll scarcely love thee more than we."

These lines, characteristic both of the writer and the subject, are copied from the Memoir of the translator of Dante, by his son, the Rev. Henry Cary, which, enriched by many interesting memorials of contemporaries, presents as valuable a picture of rare ability and excellence as ever was traced by the fine observation of filial love.

[1] A writer in *Notes and Queries* (1866) heard an account of the accident from an Edmonton tradesman, who ran to help Lamb.— F.

him very weak, and nearly insensible to things passing around him. Now and then a few words were audible, from which it seemed that his mind, in its feebleness, was intent on kind and hospitable thoughts. His last correspondent, Mr. Childs, had sent a present of a turkey, instead of the suggested pig; and the broken sentences which could be heard, were of some meeting of friends to partake of it. I do not think he knew me; and having vainly tried to engage his attention, I quitted him, not believing his death so near at hand. In less than an hour afterwards his voice gradually grew fainter, as he still murmured the names of Moxon, Procter, and some other old friends, and sank into death as placidly as into sleep.[1] On the following Saturday his remains were laid in a deep grave in Edmonton churchyard, made in a spot which, about a fortnight before, he had pointed out to his sister, on an afternoon wintry walk, as the place where he wished to be buried.[2]

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[1] "I first heard of his illness last Friday night, and on Saturday morning I went to see him. The immediate cause of his decease was erysipelas; but it was in truth a breaking up of the constitution, and he died from mere weakness. When I saw him, the disease had so altered him that it was a very melancholy sight; his mind was then almost gone, and I do not think he was conscious of my presence. He did not, I believe, suffer any pain, nor was he at all conscious of danger. Ryle saw him the day before; *then* he was perfectly sensible, talked of common things, and said he was only weak, and should be well in a day or two. He died within two hours after I saw him."—*Talfourd to H. Crabb Robinson, Dec* 31, 1834.

"When the presence was suggested of a clergyman," says Mr Procter, "he made no remark, but understood that his life was in danger; he was quite calm, and collected, and quite resigned."—F.

[2] Though unconscious of the calamity that had befallen her, she was able to go to the churchyard and point out the place to one of the executors.—F.

ELIA

So died, in the sixtieth year of his age, one of the most remarkable and amiable men who have ever lived. Few of his numerous friends were aware of his illness before they heard of his death; and, until that illness seized him, he had appeared so little changed by time, so likely to continue for several years, and he was so intimately associated with every-day engagements and feelings, that the news was as strange as it was mournful. When the first sad surprise was over, several of his friends strove to do justice to their own recollections of him; and articles upon his character and writings, all written out of the heart, appeared from Mr. Procter in the *Athenæum*, from Mr. Forster in the *New Monthly Magazine*,[1] from Mr. Patmore in the *Court Magazine*, and from Mr. Moxon in Leigh Hunt's *London Journal*, besides others whose authors are unknown to me; and subsequently many affectionate allusions, from pens which his own had inspired, have been gleaned out in various passages of *Blackwood*, *Fraser*, *Tait*, and almost every periodical work of reputation. The "Recollections of Coleridge," by Mr. Allsop, also breathed the spirit of admiration for his elevated genius, which the author—one whom Lamb held in the highest esteem for himself, and for his devotion to Coleridge—had for years expressed both in his words and in deeds.

[1] Mr. Forster's monograph will be found at the end of this memoir.—F.

CHAPTER XI.

Mary Lamb.

Little could any one, observing Miss Lamb in the habitual serenity of her demeanour, guess the calamity in which she had partaken, or the malady which frightfully chequered her life. From Mr. Lloyd, who, although saddened by impending delusion, was always found accurate in his recollection of long past events and conversations, I learned that she had described herself, on her recovery from the fatal attack, as having experienced, while it was subsiding, such a conviction that she was absolved in heaven from all taint of the deed in which she had been the agent—such an assurance that it was a dispensation of Providence for good, though so terrible—such a sense, that her mother knew her entire innocence, and shed down blessings upon her, as though she had seen the reconcilement in solemn vision—that she was not sorely afflicted by the recollection. It was as if the old Greek notion, of the necessity for the unconscious shedder of blood, else polluted though guiltless, to pass through a religious purification, had, in her case, been happily accomplished; so that, not only was she without remorse, but without other sorrow than attends on the death of an infirm parent in a good old age. She never shrank from alluding to her mother, when any topic connected with her own youth made such a reference, in ordinary respects, natural; but spoke of

her as though no fearful remembrance was associated with the image; so that some of her most intimate friends, who knew of the disaster, believed that she had never become aware of her own share in its horrors. It is still more singular that, in the wanderings of her insanity, amidst all the vast throngs of imagery she presented of her early days, this picture never recurred, or, if ever, not associated with shapes of terror.[1]

Miss Lamb would have been remarkable for the sweetness of her disposition, the clearness of her understanding, and the gentle wisdom of all her acts and words, even if these qualities had not been presented in marvellous contrast with the distraction under which she suffered for weeks, latterly for months, in every year. There was no tinge of insanity discernible in her manner to the most observant eye; not even in those distressful periods when the premonitory symptoms had apprised her of its approach, and she was making preparations for seclusion. In all its essential sweetness, her character was like her brother's; while, by a temper more placid, a spirit of enjoyment more serene, she was enabled to guide, to counsel, to cheer him, and to protect him on the verge of the mysterious calamity, from the depths of which she rose so often unruffled to his side. To a friend in any difficulty she was the most comfortable of advisers, the wisest of consolers. Hazlitt used to say, that he never met with a woman who could reason, and had met with only one

[1] From a letter of Lamb's to Mr. Hudson, the asylum where she was usually confined, seems to have been Mr. Warburton's, Whitmore House, Hoxton.—F.

thoroughly reasonable — the sole exception being Mary Lamb. She did not wish, however, to be made an exception, to a general disparagement of her sex; for in all her thoughts and feelings she was most womanly—keeping, under even undue subordination, to her notion of a woman's province, intellect of rare excellence, which flashed out when the restraints of gentle habit and humble manner were withdrawn by the terrible force of disease. Though her conversation in sanity was never marked by smartness or repartee, seldom rising beyond that of a sensible quiet gentlewoman appreciating and enjoying the talents of her friends, it was otherwise in her madness. Lamb, in his letter to a female friend, announcing his determination to be entirely with her, speaks of her pouring out memories of all the events and persons of her younger days; but he does not mention, what I am able from repeated experiences to add, that her ramblings often sparkled with brilliant description and shattered beauty. She would fancy herself in the days of Queen Anne or George the First, and describe the brocaded dames and courtly manners, as though she had been bred among them, in the best style of the old comedy. It was all broken and disjointed, so that the hearer could remember little of her discourse; but the fragments were like the jewelled speeches of Congreve, only shaken from their setting. There was sometimes even a vein of crazy logic running through them, associating things essentially most dissimilar, but connecting them by a verbal association in strange order. As a mere physical instance of deranged intellect, her condition was, I believe, extraordinary; it was as if the finest elements of mind had been shaken into fantastic combinations

like those of a kaleidoscope ;—but not for the purpose of exhibiting a curious phenomenon of mental aberration are the aspects of her insanity unveiled, but to illustrate the moral force of gentleness by which the faculties that thus sparkled when restraining wisdom was withdrawn, were subjected to its sway, in her periods of reason.[1]

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[1] Even after this touching picture of a weary, desolate life, the reader will wish for something more distinct and detailed of so interesting a character. Her devotion to her brother, as well as the effect of the always impending trial, is sufficiently brought out; but there was another side to her nature—her share in society, her eager interest in her friends, as well as her literary abilities, which has not received enough prominence. A collection of her letters, recently published by Mr. W. C. Hazlitt, offers some touches of character charmingly revealed: her earnest solicitude upon the success of a love-match of her friend, Miss Stoddart; the personal sincerity and originality of her counsels, the quaintness of her ideas, and the simple and genuine style of her writing. Her friend was later to become the wife of Wm. Hazlitt, from whom she was to be divorced so strangely. Mary Lamb entered with almost girlish enthusiasm into the details of the preparations, dress, etc.; but how incomparably wise and practical were her more sober counsels, the following extracts will show:—

"My Aunt & my Mother were wholly unlike you and your sister, yet in some degree theirs is the secret history I believe of all sisters-in-law—and you will smile when I tell you I think myself the only woman in the world who could live with a brother's wife, and make a real friend of her, partly from early observation of the unhappy example I have just given you, and partly from a knack I know I have of looking into people's real characters, and never expecting them to act out of it—never expecting another to do as I would do in the same case. When you leave your Mother, and say, if you shall never see her again, you shall feel no remorse, and when you make a *jewish* bargain with your *Lover*, all this gives me no offence, because it is your nature, and your temper, and I do not expect or want you to be otherwise than you are. I love you for the good that is in you, and look for no change.

"*But*, certainly, you ought to struggle with the evil that does most easily beset you—a total want of politeness in behaviour, I would say

The following letter from Miss Lamb to MissWords-worth, on one of the chief external events of Lamb's

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modesty of behaviour, but that I should not convey to you my idea of the word modesty; for I certainly do not mean that you want *real modesty;* and what is usually called false, or mock modesty is what I certainly do not wish you to possess; yet I trust you know what I mean well enough.

"*Secrecy*, though you appear all frankness, is certainly a grand failing of yours, it is likewise your *brother's*, and, therefore, a family failing—by secrecy, I mean that you both want the habit of telling each other at the moment every thing that happens—where you go,—and what you do,—that free communication of letters and opinions just as they arrive, as Charles and I do,—and which is, after all, the only groundwork of friendship. Your brother, I will answer for, will never tell his wife or his sister all that [is in] his mind—he will receive letters and not [mention it]—this is a fault Mrs. Stoddart can never [tell him of;] but she can and will, feel it: though, [on] the whole, and in every other respect, she is [very] happy with him. Begin, for God's sake, at the first, and tell her every thing that passes—at first she may hear you with indifference; but in time this will gain her affection and confidence—show her all your letters (no matter if she does not show hers); it is a pleasant thing for a friend to put into one's hand a letter just fresh from the post. I would even say, begin with showing her this, but that it is written freely and loosely, and some apology ought to be made for it—which I know not how to make, for I must write freely or not at all.

"If you do this she will tell your brother, you will say; and what then, quotha? It will beget a freer communication amongst you, which is a thing devoutly to be wished.

This blending of tender sympathy with a wholesome plain speaking, is even better shown in the following:—

"Let me know upon what plan you mean to come to Town. Your brother proposed your being six months in Town, & six with your Mother; but he did not then know of your poor Mother's illness. By his desire, I enquired for a respectable family for you to board with; & from Captn. Burney I heard of one I thought would suit you at that time, he particularly desires I would not think of your being with us, not thinking, I conjecture, the home of a single man *respectable* enough. Your brother gave me most unlimited orders to domineer

history, the removal from the Temple to Covent Garden, will illustrate the cordial and womanly strain

over you, to be the inspector of all your actions, & to direct & govern you with a stern voice & a high hand, to be, in short, a very elder brother over you—does not the hearing of this, my meek pupil, make you long to come to London? I am making all the proper enquiries against the time of the newest & most approved modes (being myself mainly ignorant in these points) of etiquette & nicely correct maidenly manners.

"But to speak seriously. I mean when we mean [meet], that we will lay our heads together, & consult & contrive the best way of making the best girl in the world the fine Lady her brother wishes to see her; & believe me, Sarah, it is not so difficult a matter as one is apt to imagine. I have observed many a demure Lady, who passes muster admirably well, who, I think, we could easily learn to imitate in a week or two. We will talk of these things when we meet.

"I seem, upon looking over my letter again, to have written too lightly of your distresses at Malta; but, however I may have written, believe me, I enter very feelingly into all your troubles. I love you, & I love your brother; & between you, both of whom I think have been to blame, I know not what to say—only this I say, try to think as little as possible of past miscarriages; it was, perhaps, so ordered by Providence, that you might return home to be a comfort to your poor Mother. And do not, I conjure you, let her unhappy malady afflict you too deeply. I speak from experience, & from the opportunity I have had of much observation in such cases, that insane people, in the fancy's they take into their heads, do not feel as one in a sane state of mind does under the real evil of poverty, the perception of having done wrong, or any such thing that runs in their heads.

"Think as little as you can, & let your whole care be to be certain that she is treated with *tender*ness. I lay a stress upon this, because it is a thing of which people in her state are uncommonly susceptible, & which hardly any one is at all aware of, a hired nurse *never*, even though in all other respects they are good kind of people. I do not think your own presence necessary, unless she *takes to you very much*, except for the purpose of seeing with your own eyes that she is very kindly treated.

"I do long to see you! God bless and comfort you!

"Yours affectionately, "M. LAMB."—F.

of her observation on the occurrences of daily life, and afford a good idea of her habitual conversation among her friends :—[1]

"My dear Miss Wordsworth,—Your kind letter has given us very great pleasure, the sight of your handwriting was a most welcome surprise to us. We have heard good tidings of you by all our friends who were so fortunate as to visit you this summer, and rejoice to see it confirmed by yourself. You have quite the advantage, in volunteering a letter; there is no merit in replying to so welcome a stranger.

"We have left the Temple. I think you will be sorry to hear this. I know I have never been so well satisfied with thinking of you at Rydal Mount, as when I could connect the idea of you with your own Grasmere Cottage. Our rooms were dirty and out of repair, and the inconveniences of living in chambers became every year more irksome, and so, at last, we mustered up resolution enough to leave the good old place, that so long had sheltered us, and here we are, living at a brazier's shop, No. 20, in Russell Street,

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[1] "I have a clear recollection," says Mr. Allsop, recalling some domestic trouble, "of Miss Lamb's addressing me in *a tone* acting *at once* as a solace and support, and afterwards as a stimulus, to which I owe more, perhaps, than to the extended *arguments* of all others."

As was the style of her letters, so was the style of her books; natural, unaffected, and quaint. Mr. Landor, in a letter to Lady Blessington, dwells with rapture on one touch in "Mrs. Leicester's School," where a little child, on the morning of her father's second marriage, is so delighted with the dress prepared for her, that she joyously wishes her mamma was there to see it. The enduring popularity of the "Tales from Shakespeare," is further evidence of her gifts; and it appears that her brother was eager that she should attempt a regular work for the stage. She once applied to a friend to furnish her with a regular story to dramatise.—F.

Covent Garden, a place all alive with noise and bustle; Drury Lane Theatre in sight from our front, and Covent Garden from our back windows. The hubbub of the carriages returning from the play does not annoy me in the least; strange that it does not, for it is quite tremendous. I quite enjoy looking out of the window, and listening to the calling up of the carriages, and the squabbles of the coachmen and link-boys. It is the oddest scene to look down upon; I am sure you would be amused with it. It is well I am in a cheerful place, or I should have many misgivings about leaving the Temple. I look forward with great pleasure to the prospect of seeing my good friend, Miss Hutchinson. I wish Rydal Mount, with all its inhabitants enclosed, were to be transplanted with her, and to remain stationary in the midst of Covent Garden.

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"Charles has had all his Hogarths bound in a book; they were sent home yesterday, and now that I have them all together, and perceive the advantage of peeping close at them through my spectacles, I am reconciled to the loss of them hanging round the room, which has been a great mortification to me—in vain I tried to console myself with looking at our new chairs and carpets, for we have got new chairs, and carpets covering all over our two sitting-rooms; I missed my old friends, and could not be comforted—then I would resolve to learn to look out of the window, a habit I never could attain in my life, and I have given it up as a thing quite impracticable—yet when I was at Brighton, last summer, the first week I never took my eyes off from the sea, not even to look in a book: I had not seen the sea for sixteen years.

Mrs. M——, who was with us, kept her liking, and continued her seat in the window till the very last, while Charles and I played truants, and wandered among the hills, which we magnified into little mountains, and *almost as good as* Westmoreland scenery: certainly we made discoveries of many pleasant walks, which few of the Brighton visitors have ever dreamed of—for like as is the case in the neighbourhood of London, after the first two or three miles we were sure to find ourselves in a perfect solitude. I hope we shall meet before the walking faculties of either of us fail; you say you can walk fifteen miles with ease; that is exactly my stint, and more fatigues me; four or five miles every third or fourth day, keeping very quiet between, was all Mrs. M—— could accomplish.

"God bless you and yours. Love to all and each one.

"I am ever yours most affectionately,

"M. LAMB."

Of that deeper vein of sentiment in Mary Lamb, seldom revealed, the following passages from a letter to the same lady, referring to the death of a brother of her beloved correspondent, may be offered as a companion specimen:—

"My dear Miss Wordsworth,—I thank you, my kind friend, for your most comfortable letter; till I saw your own handwriting I could not persuade myself that I should do well to write to you, though I have often attempted it; but I always left off dissatisfied with what I had written, and feeling that I was doing an improper thing to intrude upon your sorrow. I wished to tell you that you would one day feel the kind of peaceful state of mind and sweet memory of the dead, which you so happily describe as now almost

begun; but I felt that it was improper, and most grating to the feelings of the afflicted, to say to them that the memory of their affection would in time become a constant part, not only of their dream, but of their most wakeful sense of happiness. That you would see every object with and through your lost brother, and that that would at last become a real and everlasting source of comfort to you, I felt, and well knew, from my own experience in sorrow; but till you yourself began to feel this I did not dare to tell you so; but I send you some poor lines which I wrote under this conviction of mind, and before I heard Coleridge was returning home. I will transcribe them now, before I finish my letter, lest a false shame prevent me then, for I know they are much worse than they ought to be, written as they were, with strong feeling, and on such a subject; every line seems to be to be borrowed, but I had no better way of expressing my thoughts, and I never have the power of altering or amending anything I have once laide aside with dissatisfaction.

"Why is he wandering on the sea?—
Coleridge should now with Wordsworth be.
By slow degrees he'd steal away
Their woe, and gently bring a ray
(So happily he'd time relief,)
Of comfort from their very grief.
He'd tell them that their brother dead,
When years have passèd o'er their head,
Will be remembered with such holy,
True, and perfect melancholy,
That ever this lost brother John
Will be their heart's companion.
His voice they'll always hear,
His face they'll always see;
There's nought in life so sweet
As such a memory."

The excellence of Mary Lamb's nature was happily developed in her portion of those books for children—"wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best,"—which she wrote in conjunction with her brother, the "Poetry for Children," the "Tales from Shakespeare," and "Mrs. Leicester's School." How different from the stony nutriment provided for those delicate, apprehensive, affectionate creatures, in the utilitarian books, which starve their little hearts, and stuff their little heads with shallow science, and impertinent facts, and selfish morals! One verse, which she did not print—the conclusion of a little poem supposed to be expressed in a letter by the son of a family who, when expecting the return of its father from sea, received news of his death,—recited by her to Mr. Martin Burney, and retained in his fond recollection, may afford a concluding example of the healthful wisdom of her lessons:—

"I can no longer feign to be
A thoughtless child in infancy;
I tried to write like young Marie,
But I am James her brother;
And I can feel—but she's too young—
Yet blessings on her prattling tongue,
She sweetly soothes my mother."

Contrary to Lamb's expectations, who feared (as also his friends feared with him) the desolation of his own survivorship, which the difference of age rendered probable, Miss Lamb survived him for nearly thirteen years. When he died she was mercifully in a state of partial estrangement, which, while it did not wholly obscure her mind, deadened her feelings, so that as she gradually regained her perfect senses she felt as gradually the full force of the blow, and was the better

able calmly to bear it.[1] For awhile she declined the importunities of her friends, that she would leave Edmonton for a residence nearer London, where they might more frequently visit her. *He* was there, asleep in the old churchyard, beneath the turf near which they had stood together, and had selected for a resting-place;[2] to this spot she used, when well, to stroll

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[1] A month later, Mr. Crabb Robinson found his way down to Edmonton to see her, and gives the following pathetic description of the bereaved sister's state:—

"A melancholy sight," he writes. "She was neither violent nor unhappy; nor was she entirely without sense. A stranger would have seen little remarkable about her. She was, however, out of her mind, as the expression is; but she would combine ideas imperfectly. On my going into the room where she was sitting with Mr. Walden, she exclaimed with great vivacity, '*Oh, here's Crabby!*' She gave me her hand with great cordiality, and said, 'Now, this is very kind—not merely goodnatured, but very, very kind to come and see me in my affliction.' And she ran on about the unhappy insane family of my old friend, ——. Her mind seemed to turn to subjects connected with insanity, as well as with her brother's death. She spoke of his birth, and said he was a weakly but very pretty child. I have no doubt but that if she ever be sensible of her brother's loss it will overset her again. She will live for ever in the memory of her friends as one of the most amiable and admirable of women."—F.

[2] About a year later she was restored, and her friends were delighted to meet her of an evening at Mr. Moxon's. "She was very comfortable," says Mr. C. Robinson, "not in high spirits, but calm, and she seemed to enjoy the sight of so many old friends. There were Cary, Alsop, and Miss James. There was no direct talk about her brother. Wordsworth's epitaph she disapproves of. She does not like any allusion to his being a clerk, or to family misfortunes." A little scene that recalls Boswell's account of Mrs. Garrick after her bereavement, when she, too, spoke cheerfully, and looking at her husband's portrait, talked of the time when she would meet him again. In August, 1837, he again paid her visit, when she took him to her brother's grave. Soon the forebodings of her friend were to be realized, and over the last years of the faithful sister settled the darkest clouds. In August, 1839

out mournfully in the evening, and to this spot she would contrive to lead any friend who came in the summer evenings to drink tea and went out with her afterwards for a walk.[1] At length, as her illness

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we have this sad glimpse of her: "Mary Lamb," writes Mr. Robinson, "has been ill for nine months. Her mind is gone, or at least inert. She says she bears solitude better than she did." And then the kind-hearted visitor sat down and tried to divert what her mother sixty years before called her "poor moythered wits," with a game of piquet. In March, 1843, he was with her again, and found that even these faint sparks of intelligence had fled. She was now "a mere wreck of herself." Then came release, and the last scene of all, the unostentatious progress from St. John's Wood to Edmonton. Mr. Crabb Robinson adds a few details to Talfourd's simple description. "Two mourning coaches," he writes, "accompanied the body to Enfield across a pretty country. The heat was oppressive. We took refreshment at the house where dear Charles Lamb died. The attendant mourners—a most unsuitable word, for we all felt her departure was a relief—were Talfourd, Ryle, and Arnold (of the India House) Lamb's two executors, Moxon, myself, Martin Burney, Alsop, Moxhay, and Forster, the clever writer in the *Examiner*. No sadness was assumed," etc. —F.

[1] Landor's affectionate interest in brother and sister is shown by his touching sonnet:

TO THE SISTER OF CHARLES LAMB.

"Comfort thee, O thou mourner, yet awhile!
Again shall Elia's smile
Refresh thy heart, when heart can ache no more.
What is it we deplore?
He leaves behind him, freed from griefs and years
Far worthier things than tears:
The love of friends without a single foe,
Unequall'd lot below!
His gentle soul, his genius, these are thine;
Shalt thou for those repine?
He may have left the lowly walks of men.
Left them he has. What then?

became more frequent, and her frame much weaker, she was induced to take up her abode under genial care, at a pleasant house in St. John's Wood, where she was surrounded by the old books and prints, and was frequently visited by her reduced number of surviving friends. Repeated attacks of her malady weakened her mind, but she retained to the last her sweetness of disposition unimpaired, and gently sunk into death on the 20th of May, 1847.

A few survivors of the old circle, now sadly thinned,

Are not his footsteps followed by the eyes
Of all the good and wise?
Tho' the warm day is over, yet they seek
Upon the lofty peak
Of his pure mind the roseate light that glows
O'er Death's perennial snows,
Behold him! From the spirits of the Blest
He speaks, he bids thee rest."—F.

The following Sonnet, by Mr. Moxon, written at this period of tranquil sadness in Miss Lamb's life, so beautifully embodies the reverential love with which the sleeping and the mourning were regarded by one of their nearest friends, that I gratify myself by extracting it from the charming little volume of his Sonnets, which it adorns:—

"Here sleeps, beneath this bank, where daisies grow,
The kindliest sprite earth holds within her breast;
In such a spot I would this frame should rest,
When I to join my friend far hence shall go.
His only mate is now the minstrel lark,
Who chants her morning music o'er his bed,
Save she who comes each evening, ere the bark
Of watch-dog gathers drowsy folds, to shed
A sister's tears. Kind Heaven, upon her head,
Do thou in dove-like guise thy spirit pour,
And in her aged path some flowerets spread
Of earthly joy, should Time for her in store
Have weary days and nights, ere she shall greet
Him whom she longs in Paradise to meet."

attended her remains to the spot in Edmonton church yard, where they were laid above those of her brother. With them was one friend of later days—but who had become to Lamb as one of his oldest companions, and for whom Miss Lamb cherished a strong regard —Mr. John Forster, the author of "The Life of Goldsmith," in which Lamb would have rejoiced, as written in a spirit congenial with his own. In accordance with Lamb's own feeling, so far as it could be gathered from his expressions on a subject to which he did not often, or willingly, refer, he had been interred in a deep grave, simply dug, and wattled round, but without any affectation of stone or brick-work to keep the human dust from its kindred earth. So dry, however, is the soil of the quiet churchyard that the excavated earth left perfect walls of stiff clay, and permitted us just to catch a glimpse of the still untarnished edges of the coffin in which all the mortal part of one of the most delightful persons who ever lived was contained, and on which the remains of her he had loved with love "passing the love of woman" were henceforth to rest;—the last glances we shall ever have even of that covering;—concealed from us as we darted, by the coffin of the sister. We felt, I believe, after a moment's strange shuddering, that the reunion was well accomplished; and although the true-hearted son of Admiral Burney, who had known and loved the pair we quitted, from a child, and who had been the dearest objects of existence to him, refused to be comforted,—even he will join the scanty remnant of their friends in the softened remembrance that "they were lovely in their lives," and own with them the consolation of adding at last, "that in death they are not divided!"

CHAPTER XII.

Lamb fully known.—His Character.

The story of the lives of Charles and Mary Lamb is now told; nothing more remains to be learned respecting it. The known collateral branches of this stock are extinct, and their upward pedigree lost in those humble tracks on which the steps of Time leave so light an impress, that the dust of a few years obliterates all trace, and affords no clue to search collaterally for surviving relatives. The world has therefore all the materials for judging of them which can be possessed by those, who, not remembering the delightful peculiarities of their daily manners, can only form imperfect ideas of what they were. Before bidding them a last adieu, we may be allowed to linger a little longer and survey their characters by the new and solemn lights which are now, for the first time, fully cast upon them.

Except to the few who were acquainted with the tragical occurrences of Lamb's early life, some of his peculiarities seemed strange—to be forgiven, indeed, to the excellences of his nature, and the delicacy of his genius,—but still, in themselves, as much to be wondered at as deplored. The sweetness of his character, breathed through his writings, was felt even by strangers; but its heroic aspect was unguessed, even by many of his friends. Let them now consider it, and ask if the annals of self-sacrifice can show

anything in human action and endurance more lovely than its self-devotion exhibits! It was not merely that he saw (which his elder brother cannot be blamed for not immediately perceiving) through the ensanguined cloud of misfortune which had fallen upon his family, the unstained excellence of his sister, whose madness had caused it; that he was ready to take her to his own home with reverential affection, and cherish her through life; that he gave up, for her sake, all meaner and more selfish love, and all the hopes which youth blends with the passion which disturbs and ennobles it: not even that he did all this cheerfully, and without pluming himself upon his brotherly nobleness as a virtue, or seeking to repay himself (as some uneasy martyrs do) by small instalments of long repining,—but that he carried the spirit of the hour in which he first knew and took his course, to the last. So far from thinking that his sacrifice of youth and love to his sister gave him a license to follow his own caprice at the expense of her feelings, even in the lightest matters, he always wrote and spoke of her as his wiser self; his generous benefactress, of whose protecting care he was scarcely worthy. How his pen almost grew wanton in her praise, even when she was a prisoner in the Asylum after the fatal attack of lunacy, his letters of the time to Coleridge show; but that might have been a mere temporary exaltation—the attendant fervour of a great exigency and a great resolution. It was not so; nine years afterwards (1805), in a letter to Miss Wordsworth, he thus dilates on his sister's excellences, and exaggerates his own frailties:—

"To say all that I know of her would be more than

I think anybody could believe or even understand; and when I hope to have her well again with me, it would be sinning against her feelings to go about to praise her; for I can conceal nothing that I do from her. She is older, and wiser, and better than I, and all my wretched imperfections I cover to myself by resolutely thinking on her goodness. She would share life and death, heaven and hell, with me. She lives but for me; and I know I have been wasting and teasing her life for five years past incessantly with my cursed ways of going on. But even in this upbraiding of myself I am offending against her, for I know that she has cleaved to me for better, for worse; and if the balance has been against her hitherto, it 'was a noble trade.'"[1]

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[1] If the brother was always oppressed by the sense of her impending insanity, it seems that the sister had her trouble in the anxiety lest he should be tempted into some excess. This double "anangke" perpetually overshadowed their house. One of the curious touches in her home life is her acting as bridesmaid to Hazlitt's wife—Miss Stoddart. Mrs. Cowden Clarke recalls "a certain old-world fashion in Mary Lamb's diction which gave it a most natural and quaintly pleasant effect, and which heightened rather than detracted from the more heartfelt or important things she uttered. She had a way of repeating her brother's words assertingly when he spoke to her. He once said (with his peculiar mood of tenderness, beneath blunt, abrupt speech), 'You must die first, Mary.' She nodded, with her little quiet nod and sweet smile: 'Yes, I must die first, Charles.' At another time, he said, in his whimsical way, plucking out the words in gasps, as it were, between the smiles with which he looked at her: 'I call my sister "Moll," before the servants; "Mary," in presence of friends; and "Maria," when I am alone with her.'"

"All their personal thoughts, feelings, and associations," says Mr. Patmore, "were so entirely centred in those of each other, that it was only by an almost painful effort they were allowed to wander elsewhere, even at the brief intervals claimed by that social intercourse

Let it also be remembered that this devotion of the entire nature was not exercised merely in the consciousness of a past tragedy; but during the frequent recurrences of the calamity which caused it, and the constant apprehension of its terrors; and this for a large portion of life, in poor lodgings, where the brother and sister were, or fancied themselves, "marked people;" where from an income incapable of meeting the expense of the sorrow without sedulous privations, he contrived to hoard, not for holiday enjoyment, or future solace, but to provide for expected distress. Of the misery attendant on this anticipation, aggravated by jealous fears lest some imprudence or error of his own should have hastened the inevitable evil, we have a glimpse in the letter to Miss Wordsworth above quoted, and which seems to have been written in reply to one which that excellent lady had addressed to Miss Lamb, and which had fallen into the brother's care during one of her sad absences.

"Your long kind letter has not been thrown away, but poor Mary, to whom it is addressed, cannot yet relish it. She has been attacked by one of her severe illnesses, and is at present *from home*. Last Monday week was the day she left me; and I hope I may calculate upon having her again in a month or a little more. I am rather afraid late hours have, in this case, contributed to her indisposition. But when she begins to discover symptoms of approaching illness, it is not easy to say what is best to do. Being by ourselves is

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which they nevertheless could not persuade themselves wholly to shun. They had been for so many years accustomed to look to each other alone for sympathy and support, that they could scarcely believe these to exist apart from themselves. This gave to both an absent and embarrassed air."—F.

bad, and going out is bad. I get so irritable and wretched with fear, that I constantly hasten on the disorder. You cannot conceive the misery of such a foresight. I am sure that, for the week before she left me, I was little better than light-headed. I now am calm, but sadly taken down and flat. I have every reason to suppose that this illness, like all her former ones, will be but temporary. But I cannot always feel so. Meantime she is dead to me!"

The constant impendency of this giant sorrow saddened to "the Lambs" even their holidays; as the journey which they both regarded as the relief and charm of the year was frequently followed by a seizure; and, when they ventured to take it, a strait-waistcoat, carefully packed by Miss Lamb herself, was their constant companion. Sad experience, at last, induced the abandonment of the annual excursion, and Lamb was contented with walks in and near London, during the interval of labour. Miss Lamb experienced, and full well understood premonitory symptoms of the attack, in restlessness, low fever, and the inability to sleep; and, as gently as possible, prepared her brother for the duty he must soon perform; and thus, unless he could stave off the terrible separation till Sunday, obliged him to ask leave of absence from the office as if for a day's pleasure—a bitter mockery! On one occasion Mr. Charles Lloyd met them, slowly pacing together a little footpath in Hoxton fields, both weeping bitterly, and found on joining them, that they were taking their solemn way to the accustomed Asylum!

Will any one, acquainted with these secret passages of Lamb's history, wonder that, with a strong physical inclination for the stimulus and support of strong

drinks—which man is framed moderately to rejoice in —he should snatch some wild pleasure "between the acts" (as he called them) "of his distressful drama," and that, still more, during the loneliness of the solitude created by his sister's absences, he should obtain the solace of an hour's feverish dream? That, notwithstanding that frailty, he performed the duties of his hard lot with exemplary steadiness and discretion is indeed wonderful—especially when it is recollected that he had himself been visited, when in the dawn of manhood, with his sister's malady, the seeds of which were lurking in his frame. While that natural predisposition may explain an occasional flightiness of expression on serious matters, fruit of some wayward fancy, which flitted through his brain, without disturbing his constant reason or reaching his heart, and some little extravagances of fitful mirth, how does it heighten the moral courage by which the disease was controlled and the severest duties performed! Never surely was there a more striking example of the power of a virtuous, rather say, of a pious, wish to conquer the fiery suggestions of latent insanity than that presented by Lamb's history. Nervous, tremulous, as he seemed—so slight of frame that he looked only fit for the most placid fortune—when the dismal emergencies which chequered his life arose, he acted with as much promptitude and vigour as if he had never penned a stanza nor taken a glass too much, or was strung with herculean sinews. None of those temptations, in which misery is the most potent, to hazard a lavish expenditure for an enjoyment to be secured against fate and fortune, ever tempted him to exceed his income, when scantiest, by a shilling. He had always a reserve for poor Mary's periods of seclusion, and

something in hand besides for a friend in need;—and on his retirement from the India House, he had amassed, by annual savings, a sufficient sum (invested after the prudent and classical taste of Lord Stowell, in "the elegant simplicity of Three per Cents.") to secure comfort to Miss Lamb, when his pension should cease with him, even if the India Company, his great employers, had not acted nobly by the memory of their inspired clerk—as they did—and gave her the annuity to which a wife would have been entitled,[1] but of which he could not feel assured. Living among literary men, some less distinguished and less discreet than those we have mentioned, he was constantly importuned to relieve distresses which an improvident speculation in literature produces, and which the recklessness attendant on the empty vanity of self-exaggerated talent renders desperate and merciless;—and to the importunities of such hopeless petitioners he gave too largely—though he used sometimes to express a painful sense that he was diminishing his own store without conferring any real benefit. "Heaven," he used to say, "does not owe me sixpence for all I have given, or lent (as they call it) to such importunity; I only gave it because I could not bear to refuse it; and I have done no good by my weakness." On the other hand, he used to seek out occasions of devoting a part of his surplus to those of his friends whom he believed it would really serve, and almost forced loans, or gifts in the disguise of loans, upon them. If he thought one, in such a position, would be the happier for £50 or £100, he would carefully procure a note for the sum, and, perhaps, for days

[1] Her pension was fixed at £120.—F.

before he might meet the object of his friendly purpose, keep the note in his waistcoat pocket, burning in it to be produced, and, when the occasion arrived—"in the sweet of the night"—he would crumple it up in his hand and stammer out his difficulty of disposing of a little money; "I don't know what to do with it—pray take it—pray use it—you will do me a kindness if you will"—he would say; and it was hard to disoblige him![1]

Let any one who has been induced to regard Lamb as a poor, slight, excitable, and excited being, consider that such acts as these were not infrequent—that he exercised hospitality of a substantial kind, without stint, all his life—that he spared no expense for the comfort of his sister, *there* only lavish—and that he died leaving sufficient to accomplish all his wishes for survivors[2]—and think what the sturdy

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[1] This refers to Mr. Procter, who relates the story in his Recollections.

"He had," says Mr. Moxon, "for some years upon his bounty three pensioners. He allowed his old schoolmistress thirty pounds a year;" and to Morgan, a friend of Southey's, who was paralysed and suddenly reduced to poverty, he agreed to give a pension of ten pounds a year. But there is one instance of this noble being's generosity, beside which the lavish cheques of ostentatious charity seem paltry. Mr. Forster has found among his papers a circular that was sent out soliciting aid for Godwin—then much straitened in his means. Here Lord Byron contributes twenty-five guineas; Lord Dudley, fifty; Mackintosh, ten; Mr. Murray, of Albemarle Street, the same; but the generous Charles Lamb, out of his pittance, on which there were such pressing claims, gave fifty pounds!—F.

[2] "By strict economy, without meanness," says Mr. Procter, when closing his genial reminiscences; "with much unpretending hospitality; with frequent gifts and lendings, and without any borrowing, he accumulated, during his thirty-three years of constant labour, the moderate sum of £2000. No more. That was the sum, I believe,

quality of his goodness must have been amidst all the heart-aches and head-aches of his life—and ask the virtue which has been supported by strong nerves, whether it has often produced any good to match it?

The influence of the events now disclosed may be traced in the development and direction of Lamb's faculties and tastes, and in the wild contrasts of expression which sometimes startled strangers. The literary preferences disclosed in his early letters, are often inclined to the superficial in poetry and thought —the theology of Priestley, though embraced with pious earnestness—the "divine chit-chat" of Cowper —the melodious sadness of Bowles; and his own style, breathing a graceful and modest sweetness, is without any decided character. But by the terrible realities of his experience, he was turned to seek a kindred interest in the "sterner stuff" of old tragedy —to catastrophes more fearful even than his own—to the aspects of "pale passion"—to shapes of heroic daring and more heroic suffering—to the agonising contests of opposing affections, and the victories of the soul over calamity and death, which the old English drama discloses, and in the contemplation of which he saw his own suffering nature at one mirrored and exalted. Thus, instead of admiring, as he once

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which was eventually shared amongst his legatees. The property of Charles Lamb, or so much as might be wanted for the purpose, was by his will directed to be applied towards the maintenance and comfort of his sister: and subject to that primary object, it was vested in trustees for the benefit of Miss Isola—Mrs. Moxon."

I have searched at Doctors' Commons for his will, but without success. —F.

admired, Rowe and Otway,[1] even Massinger seemed too declamatory to satisfy him; in Ford, Decker, Marlowe and Webster, he found the most awful struggles of affection, and the "sad embroidery" of fancy-streaked grief, and expressed his kindred feelings in those little quintessences of criticism which are appended to the noblest scenes in his "Specimens;" and, seeking amidst the sunnier and more varied world of Shakespeare for the profoundest and most earnest passion developed there, obtained that marvellous insight into the soul of Lear which gives to his presentment of its riches almost the character of creation. On the other hand, it was congenial pastime with him to revel in the opposite excellences of Beaumont and Fletcher, who changed the domain of tragedy into fairy-land; turned all its terror and its sorrow "to favour and to prettiness;" shed the rainbow hues of sportive fancy with equal hand among tyrants and victims, the devoted and the faithless, suffering and joy; represented the beauty of goodness as a happy accident, vice as a wayward aberration, and invoked the remorse of a moment to change them as with a harlequin's wand; unrealized the terrible, and left "nothing serious in mortality," but reduced the struggle of life to a glittering and heroic game to be

[1] He used to mention two pretty lines in the "Orphan:"—

"Sweet as the shepherd's pipe upon the mountains,
With all his fleecy flock at feed beside him,"

as a redeeming passage amid mere stage trickeries. The great merit which lies in the construction of "Venice Preserved," was not in his line of appreciation; and he thought Thomson's reference to Otway's ladies:

—— "Poor Monimia moans,
And Belvedera pours her soul in love,"

worth both heroines.

played splendidly out, and quitted without a sigh. But neither Lamb's own secret griefs, nor the tastes which they nurtured, ever shook his faith in the requisitions of duty, or induced him to dally with that moral paradox to which near acquaintance with the great errors of mighty natures is sometimes a temptation. Never, either in writing or in speech, did he purposely confound good with evil. For the new theories of morals which gleamed out in the conversation of some of his friends, he had no sympathy; and, though in his boundless indulgence to the perversities and faults of those whom long familiarity had endeared to him, he did not suffer their frailties to impair his attachment to the individuals, he never palliated the frailties themselves; still less did he emblazon them as virtues.

No one, acquainted with Lamb's story, will wonder at the eccentric wildness of his mirth—his violent changes from the serious to the farcical—the sudden reliefs of the "heat-oppressed brain," and heart weighed down by the sense of ever-impending sorrow.[1] His

[1] A good specimen of this "eccentric wildness of his mirth," is the little scene described with such vivacity by Haydon, the painter. The dinner was given in 1817; Wordsworth, Keats, and a few more being the guests. "Lamb got exceedingly merry and exquisitely witty, and his fun in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion. He made a speech and voted me absent, and made them drink my health. 'Now,' said Lamb, 'you old lake poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?' We all defended Wordsworth, and affirmed there was a state of mind when Voltaire would be dull. Well,' said Lamb, 'here's Voltaire—the Messiah of the French nation, and a very proper one too.'

"He then, in a strain of humour beyond description, abused me for putting Newton's head into my picture,—'a fellow,' said he, 'who believed nothing unless it was as clear as the three sides of a triangle.'

whim, however, almost always bordered on wisdom. It was justly said of him by Hazlitt, "His serious con-

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And then he and Keats agreed he had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to the prismatic colours. It was impossible to resist him, and we all drank 'Newton's health, and confusion to mathematics.' It was delightful to see the good-humour of Wordsworth in giving in to all our frolics without affectation, and laughing as heartily as the best of us.

"By this time other friends joined, amongst them poor Ritchie, who was going to penetrate by Fezzan to Timbuctoo. I introduced him to all as 'a gentleman going to Africa.' Lamb seemed to take no notice; but all of a sudden he roared out, 'Which is the gentleman we are going to lose?' We then drank the victim's health, in which Ritchie joined.

"In the morning of this delightful day, a gentleman, a perfect stranger, had called on me. He said he knew my friends, had an enthusiasm for Wordsworth and begged I would procure him the happiness of an introduction. He told me he was a comptroller of stamps, and often had correspondence with the poet. I thought it a liberty; but still, as he seemed a gentleman, I told him he might come.

"When we retired to tea we found the comptroller. In introducing him to Wordsworth I forgot to say who he was. After a little time the comptroller looked down, looked up and said to Wordsworth, 'Don't you think, sir, Milton was a great genius?' Keats looked at me, Wordsworth looked at the comptroller. Lamb who was dozing by the fire turned round and said, 'Pray, sir, did you say Milton was a great genius?' 'No, sir; I asked Mr. Wordsworth if he were not.' 'Oh,' said Lamb, 'then you are a silly fellow!' 'Charles! my dear Charles!' said Wordsworth; but Lamb, perfectly innocent of the confusion he had created, was off again by the fire.

"After an awful pause the comptroller said, 'Don't you think Newton a great genius?' I could not stand it any longer. Keats put his head into my books. Ritchie squeezed in a laugh. Wordsworth seemed asking himself, 'Who is this?' Lamb got up, and taking a candle, said, 'Sir, will you allow me to look at your phrenological development?' He then turned his back on the poor man, and at every question of the comptroller he chaunted—

'Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John
Went to bed with his breeches on.'

versation, like his serious writing, is his best. No one ever stammered out such fine, piquant, deep, eloquent things in half-a-dozen half sentences; his jests scald like tears, and he probes a question with a play on words."

Although Lamb's conversation vibrated between the intense and the grotesque, his writings are replete with quiet pictures of the humbler scenery of middle life, touched with a graceful and loving hand. We may trace in them the experience of a nature bred up in slender circumstances, but imbued with a certain

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The man in office, finding Wordsworth did not know who he was, said in a spasmodic and half-chuckling anticipation of assured victory, 'I have had the honour of some correspondence with you, Mr. Wordsworth.' 'With me, sir?' said Wordsworth, 'not that I remember.' 'Don't you, sir? I am a comptroller of stamps.' There was a dead silence;—the comptroller evidently thinking that was enough. While we were waiting for Wordsworth's reply, Lamb sung out:

'Hey diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle.'

"'My dear Charles!' said Wordsworth,—

'Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John,'

chaunted Lamb, and then rising, exclaimed, 'Do let me have another look at that gentleman's organs.' Keats and I hurried Lamb into the painting-room, shut the door and gave way to inextinguishable laughter. Monkhouse followed and tried to get Lamb away. We went back but the comptroller was irreconcilable. We soothed and smiled and asked him to supper. He stayed though his dignity was sorely affected. However, being a good-natured man, we parted all in good-humour, and no ill effects followed.

"All the while, until Monkhouse succeeded, we could hear Lamb struggling in the painting-room and calling at intervals, 'Who is that fellow? Allow me to see his organs once more!'

"It was indeed an immortal evening. Wordsworth's fine intonation as he quoted Milton and Virgil, Keats' eager inspired look, Lamb's quaint sparkle of lambent humour, so speeded the stream of conversation, that in my life I never passed a more delightful time."—F.

innate spirit of gentility suggesting a respect for all its moderate appliances and unambitious pleasures. The same spirit pervaded all his own domestic arrangements, so that the intensity of his affliction was ameliorated by as much comfort as satisfaction in the outward furniture of life can give to slender fortune.

The most important light, however, shed on Lamb's intellectual life by a knowledge of his true history, is that which elucidates the change from vivid religious impressions, manifested in his earlier letters, to an apparent indifference towards immortal interests and celestial relations, which he confesses in a letter to Mr. Walter Wilson. The truth is, not that he became an unbeliever, or even a sceptic, but that the peculiar disasters in which he was plunged, and the tendency of his nature to seek immediate solaces, induced an habitual reluctance to look boldly into futurity. That conjugal love, which anticipates with far-looking eye prolonged existence in posterity, was denied to his self-sacrifice; irksome labour wearied out the heart of his days; and over his small household, Madness, like Death in the vision of Milton, continually "shook its dart," and only, at the best, "delayed to strike." Not daring to look onward, even for a little month, he acquired the habitual sense of living entirely in the present; enjoying with tremulous zest the security of the moment, and making some genial, but sad, amends for the want of all the perspective of life, by cleaving, with fondness, to its nearest objects, and becoming attached to them, even when least interesting in themselves.[1]

[1] We should hardly be inclined to accept these refinings as an apology for such religious views as Lamb held. It will also be seen what an

This perpetual grasping at transient relief from the minute and vivid present, associated Lamb's affections intimately and closely with the small details of daily existence; these became to him the "jutting frieze" and "coigne of vantage" in which his home-bred fancy "made its bed and procreant cradle;" these became imbued with his thoughts, and echoed back to him old feelings and old loves, till his inmost soul shivered at the prospect of being finally wrenched from them. Enthralled thus in the prison of an earthly home, he became perplexed and bewildered at the idea of an existence which, though holier and happier, would doubtless be entirely different from that to which he was bound by so many delicate films of custom. "Ah!" he would say, "we shall have none of these little passages of this life hereafter—none of our little quarrels and makings-up—no questionings about sixpence at whist;" and, thus repelled, he clung more closely to "the bright minutes" which he strung "on the thread of keen domestic anguish!" It is this intense feeling of the "nice regards of flesh and blood;" this dwelling in petty felicities; which

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inconsistency there is in this theory; for Lamb is shown to be so captivated with the material delights of nature, as to be disinclined to accept anything beyond; and at the same time to be so beset by the tragic horror of his life, as to be indisposed to think of a future. Lamb himself, though he might throw out such speculations in an essay, would have resented being thus taken *au pied de la lettre*. What his religious opinions were, we shall not presume to decide; but his would be a poor wretched soul who would be indebted for them to the petty enjoyments or *désagrémens* of life.

"No; Lamb's scepticism has not come lightly, nor is he a sceptic. . . . I look upon Lamb as one hovering between earth and heaven, neither hoping much nor fearing anything."—*Coleridge* in *Allsop's Letters*, etc., p. 461.—F.

makes us, apart from religious fears, unwilling to die. Small associations make death terrible, because we know, that parting with this life, we part from their company; whereas great thoughts make death less fearful, because we feel that they will be our companions in all worlds, and link our future to our present being in all ages. Such thoughts assuredly were not dead in a heart like Lamb's; they were only veiled by the nearer presences of familiar objects, and sometimes, perhaps, bursting in upon him in all their majesty, produced those startling references to sacred things, in which, though not to be quoted with approval, there was no conscious profaneness, but rather a wayward, fitful, disturbed piety. If, indeed, when borne beyond the present, he sought to linger in the past; to detect among the dust and cobwebs of antiquity, beauty, which had lurked there from old time, rather than to "rest and expatiate in a life to come," no anti-christian sentiment spread its chillness over his spirit. The shrinking into mortal life was but the weakness of a nature which shed the sweetness of the religion of its youth through the sorrows and the snatches of enjoyment which crowded his after years, and only feebly perceived its final glories, which, we may humbly hope, its immortal part is now enjoying.

It is not possible for the subtlest characteristic power, even when animated by the warmest personal regard, to give to those who never had the privilege of his companionship an idea of what Lamb was. There was an apparent contradiction in him, which seemed an inconsistency between thoughts closely associated, and which was in reality nothing but the contradiction of his genius and his fortune, fantas-

tically exhibiting itself in different aspects, which close intimacy could alone appreciate. He would startle you with the finest perception of truth, separating, by a phrase, the real from a tissue of conventional falsehoods, and the next moment, by some whimsical invention, make you "doubt truth to be a liar." He would touch the inmost pulse of profound affection, and then break off in some jest, which would seem profane "to ears polite," but carry as profound a meaning to those who had the right key, as his most pathetic suggestions; and where he loved and doted most, he would vent the overflowing of his feelings in words that looked like rudeness. He touches on this strange resource of love in his "Farewell to Tobacco," in a passage which may explain some startling freedoms with those he himself loved most dearly.

—— "Irony all, and feign'd abuse,
Such as perplext lovers use,
At a need, when in despair,
To paint forth the fairest fair;
Or in part but to express
That exceeding comeliness
Which their fancies doth so strike,
They borrow language of dislike;
And, instead of 'Dearest Miss,'
Jewel, honey, sweetheart, bliss,
And those forms of old admiring,
Call her cockatrice and siren,
Basilisk, and all that's evil,
Witch, hyena, mermaid, devil,
Ethiop, wench, and blackamoor,
Monkey, ape, and twenty more;
Friendly traitress, loving foe,—
Not that she is truly so,
But no other way they know

A contentment to express,
Borders so upon excess,
That they do not rightly wot
Whether it be pain or not."

Thus, in the very excess of affection to his sister, whom he loved above all else on earth, he would sometimes address to her some words of seeming reproach, yet so tinged with a humorous irony that none but an entire stranger could mistake his drift. His anxiety for her health, even in his most convivial moments, was unceasing. If, in company, he perceived she looked languid, he would repeatedly ask her, "Mary, does your head ache?" "Don't you feel unwell?" and would be satisfied by none of her gentle assurances, that his fears were groundless. He was always afraid of her sensibilities being too deeply engaged, and if in her presence any painful accident or history was discussed, he would turn the conversation with some desperate joke. Miss Betham, the author of the "Lay of Marie," which Lamb esteemed one of the most graceful and truly feminine works in a literature rich in female genius, who has reminded me of the trait in some recollections of Lamb, with which she has furnished me, relates, that once when she was speaking to Miss Lamb of Charles, and in her earnestness Miss Lamb had laid her hand kindly on the eulogist's shoulder, he came up hastily and interrupted them, saying, "Come, come, we must not talk sentimentally," and took up the conversation in his gayest strain.

Many of Lamb's witty and curious sayings have been repeated since his death, which are worthy to be held in undying remembrance; but they give no idea of the general tenor of his conversation, which

was far more singular and delightful in the traits, which could never be recalled, than in the epigrammatic turns which it is possible to quote. It was fretted into perpetual eddies of verbal felicity and happy thought, with little tranquil intervals reflecting images of exceeding elegance and grace. He sometimes poured out puns in startling succession; sometimes curiously contrived a train of sentences to introduce the catastrophe of a pun, which, in that case, was often startling from its own demerit. At Mr. Cary's one day, he introduced and kept up an elaborate dissertation on the various uses and abuses of the word *nice;* and when its variations were exhausted, showed what he had been driving at by exclaiming, "Well! now we have held a Council of Nice." "A pun," said he in a letter to Coleridge, in which he eulogised the Odes and Addresses of his friends Hood and Reynolds, "is a thing of too much consequence to be thrown in as a make-weight. You shall read one of the Addresses twice over and miss the puns, and it shall be quite as good, or better, than when you discover them. A pun is a noble thing *per se*. O never bring it in as an accessory![1] A pun is a sole digest of reflection (vide my 'Aids' to that awaking from a savage state); it is entire; it fills the mind; it is as perfect as a sonnet; better. It limps ashamed in the train and retinue of humour. It knows it should have an establishment of its own. The one, for instance, I made the other day; I forget which it was." Indeed, Lamb's choicest puns and humorous expressions could not be recollected.

[1] He explained to his friend Crabb Robinson that "a pun was nothing without a ridiculous element."—F.

They were born of the evanescent feeling, and died with it; "one moment *bright*, then gone for ever." The shocks of pleasurable surprise were so rapid in succession, and the thoughts suggested so new, that one destroyed the other, and left only the sense of delight behind. Frequently as I had the happiness of seeing him during twenty years, I can add nothing from my own store of recollection to those which have been collected.[1]

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[1] Miss Beetham has kindly supplied the following examples of his conversation:—A Miss Pate (when he heard of her, he asked if she was any relation to Mr. John *Head*, of Ipswich) was at a party, and he said on hearing her name, "Miss Pate I hate." "You are the first person who ever told me so, however," said she. "Oh! I mean nothing by it. If it had been Miss Dove, I should have said Miss Dove I love, or Miss Pike I like." About this time I saw Mr. Hazlitt for the first time at their house, and was talking on metaphysical subjects with him. Mr. Lamb came up, but my companion was very eloquent, and I begged him not to interrupt us. He stood silent, and Mr. Dyer came to me. "I know," said he, "that Mr. Cristall is a very fine artist, but I should like to know in what his merit principally consists. Is it colouring, character, design, etc.? My eyes are so bad!" On which Mr. Lamb began rhyming,—

"Says Mr. Dyer to Mr. Dawe,
Pray how does Mr. Cristall draw?
Says Mr. Dawe to Mr. Dyer,
He draws as well as you'd desire."

A lady he was intimate with had dark eyes, and one evening people rather persecuted him to praise them. "You should now write a couplet in praise of her eyes." "Aye do, Mr. Lamb," said she, "make an epigram about my eyes." He looked at her,—

"Your eyes! your eyes!
Are both of a size!"

Which was praise, but the least that could be accorded. Mrs. S—— recommended *honey* to him as a good thing for the eyes, and said her daughter had received much benefit from it. "I knew," said he, "she had sweet eyes, but had no idea before how they became so." At

It cannot be denied or concealed that Lamb's excellences, moral and intellectual, were blended with a

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my house once a person said something about his grandmother. "Was she a tall woman?" said Mr. Lamb. "I don't know; no, why do you ask?" "Oh! mine was, she was a granny-dear." He asked an absent lady's name, who had rather sharp features. On hearing it was Elizabeth or something of the kind, he said, "I should have thought if it had been Mary, she might have been St. Mary Axe." Another who was very much marked with the small-pox, he said, looked as if the devil had ridden rough-shod over her face. I saw him talking to her afterwards with great apparent interest, and noticed it, saying, "I thought he had not liked her." His reply was, "I like her internals very well." When I knew him first, I happened to sit next him at dinner, and he was running on about some lady who had died of love for him, saying "he was very sorry," but we could not command such inclinations, making all the common-place stuff said on such occasions appear very ridiculous; his sister laughingly interrupting him now and then, by saying, "Why she's alive now!" "Why she's married, and has a large family," etc. He would not, however, allow it, and went on. With a very serious face, therefore, when he looked my way, I said, 'And did she really die?" With a look of indignant astonishment at my simplicity, he said, "And do you think I should?" Not being able to suppress a smile, he saw what I had been about, and without finishing his speech turned away his head. The way in which he would imitate a person who had been detected in some petty theft was inimitable. He began once saying he never had been in suspicious circumstances but once, and then he had his hand over a guinea that lay on a counter, but that he really did not know it was there, etc. My youngest sister, then a little girl, in her talk afterwards, seemed to think he must have known it. Mrs. H—— was sitting on a sofa one day, between Mr. Montague and Mr. Lamb. The latter spoke to her, but all her attention was given to the other party. At last they ceased talking, and turning round to Mr. Lamb, asked what it was he had been saying? He replied, "Ask Mr. Montague, for it went in at one ear and out at another." One day at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, I was sitting on a form, looking at the catalogue and answering some young people about me who had none, or spared themselves the trouble of consulting it. There was a large picture of Prospero and Miranda, and I had just said, "It is by *Shee*" when a voice near me said, "Would it not be more grammatical

single frailty; so intimately associating itself with all that was most charming in the one, and sweetest in

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to say *her?*" I looked, it was Mr. Lamb. He went with a party down to my brother Charles's ship, in which the officers gave a ball to their friends. My brother hired a vessel to take us down to it, and some one of the company asked its name. On hearing it was the Antelope, Mr. Lamb cried out, "Don't name it, I have such a respect for my aunt I cannot bear to think of her doing such a foolish action!" I once sat with Mr. Lamb in the pit of the theatre when Mrs. Siddons gave one of her last performances. We had two vulgar and conceited women behind us, who went on explaining and commenting to show their knowledge, in a most absurd manner. Mr. Lamb occasionally gave them a lift. When Malcolm came on in particular, he said, "He a king! Why, he is in petticoats!" One of them said to the other, "It's the dress of the country. Ignorant wretches!" I had, I believe, once led the discourse in company by telling a story of a bad Arabian poet who fell sick because he could get nobody to hear him recite; the physician grasped the cane and caned him. On this, Mr. Lamb declaimed a great deal on the absurdity of reading one's own works aloud; that people were always tired instead of being pleased with it; and that he made a poem the other day befitting the time (one of those of overwhelming darkness such as ours in London sometimes are) and though he had not yet had time to transcribe it and recollect it perfectly, he should never think of repeating it to other people. Everybody, of course, were entreating him to favour them by repeating it, assuring him they should like it very much; and *at length* he complied. "O my Gog! What a fog!" "A fine thing to make a fuss about," said Miss M——. "Why, I can make a second part extempore.—I cannot see to kill a flea." A lady who had been visiting in the neighbourhood of Ipswich, on her return could talk of nothing but the beauty of the country and the merits of the people. Mr. Lamb remarked that "she was Suffolk-ated." The following specimens of his conversation have been supplied by another friend. A widow friend of Lamb having opened a preparatory school for children at Camden Town, said to him, "I live so far from town I must have a sign, I think you call it, to show that I teach children. "Well," he replied, "you can have nothing better than '*The Murder of the Innocents.*'" A gentleman who had lived some years in China mentioned that a formidable enemy to the Chinese would arise one day in a warlike

the other, that, even if it were right to withdraw it wholly from notice, it would be impossible without it

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piratical nation on the borders of China—*the Ladrones*. In the course of the evening, the progress of musical science in China was spoken of, and the traveller, by way of illustrating his remarks, sang a Chinese love-song. Lamb listened very gravely to this dissonant performance, and at the end exclaimed, "*God prosper the Ladrones.*" Coleridge one day said to him "Did you ever hear me *preach?*" "I never heard you do anything else," said Lamb. Seeing a little boy heavily laden with groceries toiling up Highgate Hill one hot summer's day, Lamb offered to assist him, took his load and carried it for him to the house where the child was to deliver it. On laying down his burden, Lamb requested the lady of the house to remonstrate with her grocer on the inhumanity of compelling a little boy to carry such a load. The lady bristled up, and sharply replied, "I have nothing to do with such matters." On which Lamb, altering his tone, irresistibly said, "I hope ma'am you'll give me a drop of beer."—*Talfourd*. This note was withdrawn from the later editions for the reason, "that so vapid would be the effect of these specimens of Lamb's humour when printed, compared to that which they produced when stammered out they gave the moment its victory." As the imagination may in part supply this accompaniment, it has been thought a pity to deprive the reader of these jests, which, though a little trivial, are characteristic in their way.

From those collected by Mr. Procter, I have selected a few of the best:—

I once said something in his presence, which I thought possessed smartness. He commended me with a stammer: "Very well, my dear boy, very well; Ben (taking a pinch of snuff), Ben Jonson has said worse things than that—and—and b—b— better." [This, with a small variation, is given in Mr. Thomas Moore's autobiography. I suppose I must have repeated it to him, and that he forgot the precise words.] The second son of George the Second, it was said, had a very cold and ungenial manner. Lamb stammered out in his defence that "this was very natural in the Duke of Cu-Cum-ber-land." "Charles," said Coleridge to Lamb, "I think you have heard me preach?" "I n—n—never heard you do anything else," replied Lamb. Mrs. K., after expressing her love for her young children, added, tenderly, "And how do *you* like babies, Mr. Lamb?" His answer, immediate

to do justice to his virtues. The eagerness with which he would quaff exciting liquors, from an early period

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almost precipitate, was "Boi-boi-boiled, ma'am." Hood tempting Lamb to dine with him, said, "We have a hare." "And many friends?" inquired Lamb. Of a man too prodigal of lampoons and verbal jokes, Lamb said, threateningly, "I'll Lamp-pun him." On two Prussians of the same name being accused of the same crime, it was remarked as curious that they were not in any way related to each other. "A mistake," said he, "they are cozens german." An old lady, fond of her discerning minister, wearied Lamb by the length of her praises. I speak, because I *know* him well, said she. "Well, I don't," replied Lamb; "I don't, but d——n him, at a 'venture.'" The Scotch, whom he did not like, "ought," he said, "to have double punishment; and to have fire without brimstone." (Coleridge had a share in this well-known jest, having "somewhat licked it into shape," Lamb told Mr. Allsop.) When Godwin was expatiating on the benefit of unlimited freedom of thought, especially in matters of religion, Lamb, who did not like this, interrupted him by humming the little child's song of "Old father Longlegs won't say his prayers," adding, violently, "*Throw him downstairs!*" This, however, was a favourite jest of the late Archbishop Whately's. His replying to some one, who insisted very strenuously on some interesting circumstances being "a matter of fact," by saying that *he* was "a matter of lie" man. Charles hated noise and fuss and fine words, but never hated any person. Once when he had said, "I hate Z.," some one present remonstrated with him, "Why, you have never seen him." "No," replied Lamb, "certainly not; I never could hate any man that I have once seen." Being asked how he felt when amongst the lakes and mountains of Cumberland, he replied that he was obliged to think of the ham and beef shop near Saint Martin's Lane; this was in order to bring down his thoughts from their almost too painful elevation, to the sober regions of everyday life. He once silenced a solemn disputant, by asking him gravely— taking his pipe out of his mouth to put the question—"Did he *really* mean to contend that a thief was not a good man?" So, too, his remark on Rogers' odd speculation as to what a man would think of his own face were it on another body; a sort of horror seized him when he saw it reflected in the glass as he shaved. He wondered how any one could feel a friendship for a person with such a face. "Then I hope you have mercy on the barbers."

of life, proved that to a physical peculiarity of constitution was to be ascribed, in the first instance, the

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said Lamb, "and always shave yourself." He was once asked how he knew his books one from the other, for hardly any were lettered: his answer was as characteristic as it was true: "How does a shepherd know his sheep?"

His puns on the Mantchou Tartars and Chinese Celtes (Man-chew and Sell-teas) are characteristic. His biographer, who had a certain solemnity, was once rather shocked at Lamb's declaring that he should like to know the witnesses in the Queen's trial, and to have supper with them. "You would not *sit* with them!" said Sir T. Talfourd, with horror. Lamb answered promptly, that "he would sit with anything but a hen or a tailor."

Not less pleasant were his jests of a practical kind. As when the poems of a gentleman whom he was to meet at dinner were submitted to him, he learned a few verses by heart, and confounded the author by quoting them as "some little verses he wrote when he was young." Presently he gave "Of man's first disobedience," which brought the gentleman to his feet in a fury, saying that he had sat by and allowed "his own little verses to be claimed; but when it came to Milton," etc. So, too, when he took a house, his placing the board with "To Let" round his dog's neck, and sending him to the agent. So when the same dog set off to chase a flock, his reply to the indignant shepherd's expostulation was, "Hunt lambs, sir! Why, he never hunted *me*."

Mr. Crabb Robinson also supplies a few of his jests:—

When Dignum and Mrs. Bland, two stout performers, came on the stage, he exclaimed, "And lo! two puddings smoked upon the boards!" The divisions where the clerks of the India House sat used to be known as "Compounds." Lamb, on being asked who these clerks were, replied, "A collection of simples." More amusing was his reply to his friend Hume, who said in presence of his numerous children, that "one fool made many." "Mr. H., you have a fine family I see." Some one said, apropos of Johnson's remark on punsters, that "they had no pockets to pick;" on which Lamb said, "No; that they carried a ridicule." Shakespeare's anachronism was mentioned, in making Hector speak of Aristotle; "That," said Lamb, "is what Johnson means: 'And panting Time toils after him in vain.'"

From Mr. Allsop's pleasant volume I take the following:—

At Billingsgate, Lamb witnessed a quarrel between two fish women,

strength of the temptation with which he was assailed. This kind of corporeal need; the struggles of deep thought to overcome the bashfulness and the impediment of speech which obstructed its utterance; the dull, heavy, irksome labours which hung heavy on his mornings, and dried up his spirits; and still more, the sorrows which had environed him, and which prompted him to snatch a fearful joy; and the unbounded craving after sympathy with human feelings, conspired to disarm his power of resisting when the means of indulgence were actually before him. Great exaggerations have been prevalent on this subject, countenanced, no doubt, by the "Confessions" which, in the prodigality of his kindness, he contributed to his friend's collection of essays and authorities against the use of spirituous liquors; for, although he had rarely the power to overcome the temptation when presented, he made heroic sacrifices in flight. His final abandonment of tobacco, after many ineffectual attempts, was one of these—a princely sacrifice. He had loved smoking, "not wisely, but too well," for he had been content to use the coarsest varieties of the "great plant." When Dr. Parr,—who took only the finest tobacco, used to half fill his pipe with salt, and smoked with a philosophic calmness,—saw Lamb smoking the strongest preparation of the weed, puffing out smoke like some furious Enchanter, he gently laid down his pipe, and asked him, how he had acquired

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one of whom, snatching up a knife, cut off the other's thumb. "Ha!" said he, looking about him as if he only just recognised the place, "this is Fairlop Fair." Martin Burney, earnestly explaining the three kinds of acid, was stopped by Lamb. "The best of all kinds of acids, however, as, you know, Martin, is uity—assiduity."—F.

his power of smoking at such a rate? Lamb replied, "I toiled after it, sir, as some men toil after virtue." Partly to shun the temptations of society, and partly to preserve his sister's health, he fled from London, where his pleasures and his heart were, and buried himself in the solitude of the country, to him always dismal. He would even deny himself the gratification of meeting Wordsworth or Southey, or use it very sparingly during their visits to London, in order that the accompaniments of the table might not entice him to excess. And if sometimes, after miles of solitary communing with his own sad thoughts, the village inn did invite him to quaff a glass of sparkling ale; and if when his retreat was lighted up with the presence of some old friend, he was unable to refrain from the small portion which was too much for his feeble frame, let not the stout-limbed and the happy exult over the consequence! Drinking with him, except so far as it cooled a feverish thirst, was not a sensual, but an intellectual pleasure; it lighted up his fading fancy, enriched his humour, and impelled the struggling thought or beautiful image into day; and perhaps by requiring for him some portion of that allowance which he extended to all human frailties, endeared him the more to those who so often received, and were delighted to bestow it.[1]

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[1] This rather fine-drawn distinction has been well disposed of by a writer in the *Edinburgh Review*. "Drinking," he says, "is not to be called an intellectual pleasure; because, when a man has once contracted the habit of excessive indulgence in the use of ardent spirits, one of its most miserable consequences is a slavish dependence on them. . . . The issue we all know: crowded jails; Sheridan a by-word, instead of perhaps prime minister." Indeed, Sir T. Talfourd, in his natural warmth for his friend's reputation, has softened Lamb's subjection to

Lamb's indulgence to the failings of others could could hardly indeed be termed allowance; the name

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this "frailty." Mr. Procter has tried to vindicate him even more thoroughly. It is a delicate matter, and there may seem something ungracious in attempting to deepen such shadows; but unhappily there is a remarkable concurrence of testimony as to this weakness, which appears to have been deplored by himself and by all his friends, though they were ever ready to offer indulgent excuses. Talfourd, Daniel, Patmore, Miss Isola, and even Mary Lamb, furnish evidence hard to contend against.

Lamb himself, in 1805, bewails his "cursed drinking," which he says for five years has been embittering his sister's life. In 1830, Miss Isola was appealing to him: "Now pray don't *drink;* do check yourself after dinner, for my sake, when we get home to Enfield, you shall drink as much as ever you please." Later he is found "turning over a new leaf," having succeeded in getting home "half as sober as a judge." "I have left off spirits," he writes in 1813 . . . "with a moral certainty of its lasting." "Alas!" adds Talfourd in a note, "for moral certainty in this moral but mortal world! Lamb's resolution to leave off spirituous liquours was a brave one; but he strengthened and rewarded it by such copious libations of porter, that his sister, for whose sake mainly he attempted the sacrifice, entreated him to "live like himself," and in a few weeks after this assurance he obeyed her.

An indulgence thus sustained, and spread over a period of more than twenty years, can hardly be softened away into complaisance with the humours of society and good-fellowship. Thus, behind the inviting pictures of the "Lamb Suppers," which have been compared to the meetings of Holland House, was always hovering this spectre.

But the following passage from a letter of Mary Lamb's, dated Nov 30th, 1810, is more significant.

"Charles was drunk last night, and drunk the night before; which night before was at Godwin's, where we went at a short summons from Mr. G., to play a solitary rubber. We finished there at twelve o'clock (Charles and Liston brim-full of gin & water & snuff): after which, Henry Robinson spent a long evening by our fireside at home; and there was much gin & water drunk, albeit only one of the party partook of it. And H. R. professed himself highly indebted to Charles for the useful information he gave him on sundry matters of taste and imagination, even after Charles could not speak plain for tipsiness.

of charity is too cold to suit it. He did not merely love his friends in spite of their errors, but he loved them errors and all; so near to him was everything human. He numbered among his associates, men of all varieties of opinion—philosophical, religious, and political—and found something to like, not only in the men themselves, but in themselves as associated with their theories and their schemes. In the high and calm, but devious speculations of Godwin; in the fierce hatreds of Hazlitt; in the gentle and glorious mysticism of Coleridge; in the sturdy opposition of Thelwall to the Government; in Leigh Hunt's softened and fancy-streaked patriotism; in the gallant Toryism of Stoddart; he found traits which made the individuals more dear to him. When Leigh Hunt was imprisoned in Cold Bath Fields for a libel, Lamb was one of his most constant visitors—and when Thelwall was striving to bring the "Champion" into notice, Lamb was ready to assist him with his pen, and to fancy himself, for the time, a Jacobin. In this large intellectual tolerance, he resembled Professor Wilson, who, notwithstanding his own decided opi-

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But still he swallowed the flattery and the spirits as savourily as Robinson did his cold water. . . .

"Last night was to be a night, but it was not. There was a certain son of one of Martin's employers, one young Mr. Blake; to do whom honour, Mrs. Burney brought forth, first rum, then a single bottle of champaine, long kept in her secret hoard; then two bottles of her best currant wine, which she keeps for Mrs. Rickman, came out; & Charles partook liberally of all these beverages. . . . The alternating Wednesdays will drop off one day in the week from your jolly days, and I do not know how we shall make it up to you; but I will contrive the best I can. Phillips comes again pretty regularly, to the great joy of Mrs. Reynolds."—*Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb* p. 83.—F.

nions, has a compass of mind large enough to embrace all others which have noble alliances within its range.[1] But not only to opposite opinions, and devious habits of thought, was Lamb indulgent; he discovered "the soul of goodness in things evil" so vividly, that the surrounding evil disappeared from his mental vision. Nothing—no discovery of error or of crime—could divorce his sympathy from a man who had once engaged it. He saw in the spendthrift, the outcast, only the innocent companion of his school-days or the joyous associate of his convivial hours, and he did not even make penitence or reform a condition of his regard. Perhaps he had less sympathy with philanthropic schemers for the improvement of the world than with any other class of men; but of these he numbered two of the greatest, Clarkson the destroyer of the slave-trade, and Basil Montague the constant opponent of the judicial infliction of death; and the labours of neither have been in vain!

To those who were not intimately acquainted with Lamb, the strong disinclination to contemplate another state of being, which he sometimes expressed in his serious conversation, and which he has solemnly confessed in his "New Year's Eve," might cast a doubt on feelings which were essentially pious. The same peculiarity of nature which attached him to the

[1] Lamb only once met that remarkable person,—who has probably more points of resemblance to him than any other living poet,—and was quite charmed with him. They walked out from Enfield together, and strolled happily a long summer's day, not omitting, however, a call for a refreshing draught. Lamb called for a pot of ale or porter—half of which would have been his own usual allowance; and was delighted to hear the Professor, on the appearance of the foaming tankard, say reproachfully to the waiter, "And one for me!"

narrow and crowded streets, in preference to the mountain and the glen—which made him loth to quit even painful circumstances and unpleasant or ill-timed company; the desire to seize and grasp all that was nearest, bound him to earth, and prompted his sympathies to revolve within a narrow circle. Yet in that very power of adhesion to outward things, might be discerned the strength of a spirit destined to live beyond them. Within the contracted sphere of his habits and desires, he detected the subtlest essences of Christian kindliness, shed over it a light from heaven, and peopled it with divine fancies and

> "Thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
> That they were born for immortality."

Although he numbered among his associates free-thinkers and sceptics, he had a great dislike to any profane handling of sacred subjects, and always discouraged polemical discussion. One evening, when Irving and Coleridge were in company, and a young gentleman had spoken slightingly of religion, Lamb remained silent; but when the party broke up, he said to the youth who had thus annoyed his guests, "Pray, did you come here in a hat, sir, or in a turban?"

The range of Lamb's reading was varied, but yet peculiar. He rejoiced in all old English authors, but cared little for the moderns, except one or two; and those whom he loved as authors because they were his friends. Attached always to things of flesh and blood rather than to "the bare earth and mountains bare, and grass in the green field," he chiefly loved the great dramatists, whose beauties he supported, and sometimes heightened, in his suggestive criticisms. While he enjoyed Wordsworth's poetry, especially "The Excursion," with a love which grew

upon him from his youth, he would repeat some of Pope's divine compliments, or Dryden's lines, weighty with sterling sense or tremendous force of satire, with eyes trembling into tears. The comedies of Wycherley, and Congreve, and Farquhar, were not to him gross and sensual, but airy, delicate creations, framed out of coarse materials it might be, but evaporating in wit and grace, harmless effusions of the intellect and the fancy. The ponderous dulness of old controversialists, the dead weight of volumes of once fierce dispute, of which time had exhausted the venom, did not appal him. He liked the massive reading of the old Quaker records, the huge density of old schoolmen, better than the flippancy of modern criticism. If you spoke of Lord Byron, he would turn the subject by quoting the lines descriptive of his namesake in *Love's Labour Lost*—"Oft have I heard of you, my Lord Byron," etc.—for he could find nothing to revere or love in the poetry of that extraordinary but most uncomfortable poet; except the apostrophe to Parnassus, in which he exults in the sight of the real mountain instead of the mere poetic image. All the Laras, and Giaours, and Childe Harolds, were to him but "unreal mockeries,"—the phantasms of a feverish dream,—forms which did not appeal to the sympathies of mankind, and never can find root among them. Shelley's poetry, too, was icy cold to him; except one or two of the minor poems, in which he could not help admiring the exquisite beauty of the expression; and the "Cenci," in which, notwithstanding the painful nature of the subject, there is a warmth and passion, and a correspondent simplicity of diction, which prove how mighty a poet the author would have become had he lived long enough for his feelings to have free dis-

course with his creative power. Responding only to the touch of human affection, he could not bear poetry which, instead of making the whole world kin, renders our own passions and frailties and virtues strange to us; presents them at a distance in splendid masquerade; exalts them into new and unauthorised mythology, and crystallises all our freshest loves and mantling joys into clusters of radiant fancies. He made some amends for his indifference to Shelley, by his admiration of Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein," which he thought the most extraordinary realization of the idea of a being out of nature which had ever been effected. For the Scotch novels he cared very little, not caring to be puzzled with new plots, and preferring to read Fielding, and Smollett, and Richardson, whose stories were familiar, over and over again, to being worried with the task of threading the maze of fresh adventure. But the good-naturedness of Sir Walter to all his contemporaries won his admiration, and he heartily rejoiced in the greatness of his fame, and the rich rewards showered upon him, and desired they might accumulate for the glory of literature and the triumph of kindness. He was never introduced to Sir Walter; but he used to speak with gratitude and pleasure of the circumstances under which he saw him once in Fleet Street. A man, in the dress of a mechanic, stopped him just at Inner Temple Gate, and said, touching his hat, "I beg your pardon, sir, but perhaps you would like to see Sir Walter Scott; that is he just crossing the road;" and Lamb stammered out his hearty thanks to his truly humane informer.[1]

[1] "His tastes, in many respects, were most singular. He preferred Wardour Street and Seven Dials to fields that were Elysian. The disappearance of the old clock from St. Dunstan's Church drew tears

Of his own writings it is now superfluous to speak; for, after having encountered long derision and neglect, they have taken their place among the classics of his language. They stand alone, at once singular and delightful. They are all carefully elaborated; yet never were works written in a higher defiance to the

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from him; nor could he ever pass without emotion the place where Exeter Change once stood. The removal had spoiled a reality in Gay. The passer-by, he said, no longer saw 'the combs dangle in his face.' This almost broke his heart. He had no taste for flowers or green fields; he preferred the high road. The Garden of Eden, he used to say, must have been a dull place. He had a strong aversion to roast beef and to fowls, and to any wines but port or sherry. Tripe and cow-heel were to him delicacies—rare dainties! . . .

"All his books were without portraits; nor did he ever preserve, with two exceptions, a single letter. He had a humorous method of testing the friendship of his visitors; it was, whether in their walks they would taste the tap of mine host at the Horse Shoe, or at the Rose and Crown, or at the Rising Sun! But a member of the Temperance Society, on these occasions, could not have been more abstemious. A single glass would suffice. We have seen ladies enter with him—the fastidious Barbara S.; and great poets—the author of the "Excursion" himself! He was no politician, though in his youth he once assisted to draw through the streets Charles James Fox! Nor was he a man of business. He could not pack up a trunk, nor tie up a parcel. Yet he was methodical, punctual in his appointments, and an excellent paymaster. A debt haunted him! He could not live in another person's books. He wished to leave a friend a small sum of money; but 'to have done with the thing,' as he said, gave it him beforehand. If an acquaintance dropped in of an evening before supper, he would instantly, without saying a word, put on his hat and go and order an extra supply of porter. He has done this for us a hundred times! Relics and keepsakes had no charm for him. A traveller once brought him some acorns from an ilex that grew over the tomb of Virgil. He threw them at the hackney-coachmen as they passed by his window! And there is a story, that he once sat to an artist of his acquaintance for a whole series of the British Admirals; but for what publication we never heard."—E. Moxon, in the *Athenæum*.—F.

conventional pomp of style. A sly hit, a happy pun, a humorous combination, lets the light into the intricacies of the subject, and supplies the place of ponderous sentences. As his serious conversation was his best, so his serious writing is far preferable to his fantastical humours,—cheering as they are, and suggestive ever as they are of high and invigorating thoughts. Seeking his materials, for the most part, in the common paths of life,—often in the humblest,—he gives an importance to everything, and sheds a grace over all. The spirit of gentility seems to breathe around all his persons; he detects the venerable and the excellent in the narrowest circumstances and humblest conditions with the same subtilty which reveals the hidden soul of the greatest works of genius. In all things he is most human. Of all modern writers, his works are most immediately directed to give us heart-ease and to make us happy.[1]

Among the felicities of Lamb's chequered life, that which he esteemed most, was his intimate friendship with some of the greatest of our poets,—Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth; the last and greatest of whom has paid a tribute to his memory, which may fitly close this memoir.

> "To a good Man of most dear memory
> This Stone is sacred. Here he lies apart
> From the great city where he first drew breath,
> Was reared and taught; and humbly earned his bread,

[1] Goethe, when Lamb's writings were spoken of before him, asked if he was the author of a pretty sonnet on his own name; a compliment with which Lamb—though he affected to depreciate Goethe—was flattered. Tieck declared that the notes to the "Specimens" were written out of his very heart.—F.

To the strict labours of the merchant's desk
By duty chained. Not seldom did those tasks
Tease, and the thought of time so spent depress
His spirit, but the recompense was high;
Firm Independence, Bounty's rightful sire;
Affections, warm as sunshine, free as air;
And when the precious hours of leisure came,
Knowledge and wisdom, gained from converse sweet
With books, or while he ranged the crowded streets
With a keen eye, and overflowing heart:
So genius triumphed over seeming wrong,
And poured out truth in works by thoughtful love
Inspired—works potent over smiles and tears.
And as round mountain-tops the lightning plays,
Thus innocently sported, breaking forth
As from a cloud of some grave sympathy,
Humour and wild instinctive wit, and all
The vivid flashes of his spoken words.
From the most gentle creature nursed in fields
Had been derived the name he bore—a name,
Wherever Christian altars have been raised,
Hallowed to meekness and to innocence;
And if in him meekness at times gave way,
Provoked out of herself by troubles strange,
Many and strange, that hung about his life;
Still, at the centre of his being, lodged
A soul by resignation sanctified:
And if too often, self-reproached, he felt
That innocence belongs not to our kind,
A power that never ceased to abide in him,
Charity, 'mid the multitude of sins
That she can cover, left not his exposed
To an unforgiving judgment from just Heaven.
O, he was good, if e'er a good man lived!
* * * * *
From a reflecting mind and sorrowing heart
Those simple lines flowed with an earnest wish,
Though but a doubting hope, that he might serve
Fitly to guard the precious dust of him
Whose virtues called them forth. That aim is missed
For much that truth most urgently required

Had from a faltering pen been asked in vain:
Yet, haply, on the printed page received,
The imperfect record, there, may stand unblamed
As long as verse of mine shall breathe the air
Of memory, or see the light of love.

Thou wert a scorner of the fields, my Friend,
But more in show than truth; and from the fields,
And from the mountains, to thy rural grave
Transported, my soothed spirit hovers o'er
Its green untrodden turf, and blowing flowers;
And taking up a voice shall speak (though still
Awed by the theme's peculiar sanctity,
Which words less free presumed not even to touch)
Of that fraternal love, whose heaven-lit lamp
From infancy, through manhood, to the last
Of threescore years, and to thy latest hour,
Burnt on with ever-strengthening light, enshrined
Within thy bosom.

'Wonderful' hath been
The love established between man and man,
'Passing the love of women;' and between
Man and his help-mate in fast wedlock joined
Through God, is raised a spirit and soul of love
Without whose blissful influence Paradise
Had been no Paradise; and earth were now
A waste where creatures bearing human form,
Direst of savage beasts, would roam in fear,
Joyless and comfortless. Our days glide on;
And let him grieve who cannot choose but grieve
That he hath been an Elm without his Vine,
And her bright flower of clustering charities,
That, round his trunk and branches, might have clung
Enchanting and adorning. Unto thee,
Not so enriched, not so adorned, to thee
Was given (say rather thou of later birth
Wert given to her) a Sister—'tis a word
Timidly uttered, for she *lives*, the meek,
The self-restraining, and the ever-kind;
In whom thy reason and intelligent heart

Found—for all interests, hopes, and tender cares,
All softening, humanising, hallowing powers,
Whether withheld, or for her sake unsought—
More than sufficient recompense!

Her love
(What weakness prompts the voice to tell it here?)
Was as the love of mothers; and when years,
Lifted the boy to man's estate, had called
The long-protected to assume the part
Of a protector, the filial tie
Was undissolved; and in or out of sight,
Remained imperishably interwoven
With life itself. Thus 'mid a shifting world,
Did they together testify of time
And seasons' difference—a double tree
With two collateral stems sprung from one root;
Such were they—and such through life they *might* have been
In union, in partition only such;
Otherwise wrought the will of the Most High;
Yet, through all visitations and all trials,
Still they were faithful; like two vessels launched
From the same beach one ocean to explore
With mutual help, and sailing—to their league
True, as inexorable winds, or bars
Floating or fixed of polar ice, allow.

But turn we rather, let my spirit turn
With thine, O silent and invisible Friend!
To those dear intervals, nor rare nor brief,
When reunited, and by choice withdrawn
From miscellaneous converse ye were taught
That the remembrance of forgone distress,
And the worse fear of future ill (which oft
Doth hang around it, as a sickly child
Upon its mother) may be both alike
Disarmed of power to unsettle present good
So prized, and things inward and outward held
In such an even balance, that the heart
Acknowledges God's grace, his mercy feels,
And in its depth of gratitude is still.

O gift divine of quiet sequestration!
The hermit, exercised in prayer and praise,
And feeding daily on the hope of heaven,
Is happy in his vow, and fondly cleaves
To life-long singleness; but happier far
Was to your souls, and, to the thoughts of others,
A thousand times more beautiful appeared,
Your *dual* loneliness. The sacred tie
Is broken; yet why grieve? for Time but holds
His moiety in trust, till Joy shall lead
To the blest world where parting is unknown." [1]

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[1] Compare, also, Leigh Hunt's "Familiar Epistle" to Charles Lamb:—

O thou, whom old Homer would call, were he living,
Home-lover, thought-feeder, abundant joke-giving,
Whose charity springs from deep knowledge, nor swerves
Into mere self-reflections, or scornful reserves,—
In short, who wert made for two centuries ago,
When Shakespeare drew men, and to write was to know,—

You'll guess why I can't see the snow-covered streets
Without thinking of you and your visiting feats,
When you call to remembrance how you and one more,
When I wanted it most, used to knock at my door;
For, when the sad winds told us rain would come down,
Or snow upon snow fairly clogged up the town,
And dun, yellow fogs brooded over its white,
So that scarcely a being was seen towards night,
Then—then said the lady yclept near and dear:
"Now, mind what I tell you—the Lambs will be here."
So I poked up the flame, and she got out the tea,
And down we both sat, as prepared as could be;
And there, sure as fate, came the knock of you two,
Then the lanthorn, the laugh, and the "Well, how d'ye do?"

Then your palm tow'rds the fire, and your face turned to me,
And shawls and great-coats being where they should be,
And due "never saws" being paid to the weather,
We cherished our knees, and sat sipping together;

And, leaving the world to the fogs and the fighters,
Discussed the pretensions of all sorts of writers:
Of Shakespeare's coevals, all spirits divine;
Of Chapman, whose Homer's a fine rough old wine;
Of Marvel, wit, patriot, poet, who knew
How to give, both at once, Charles and Cromwell their due;
Of Spenser, who wraps you, wherever you are,
In a bow'r of seclusion beneath a sweet star;
Of Richardson, too, who afflicts us so long,
We begin to suspect him of nerves over-strong;
In short, of all those who give full-measured page—
Not forgetting Sir Thanas, my ancestor sage,
Who delighted (so happy were all his digestions)
In puzzling his head with impossible questions.

But *now*, Charles, you never (so blissful you deem me)
Come lounging, with twirl of umbrella, to see me.
In vain have we hoped to be set at our ease
By the rains—which, you know, used to bring Lamb and pease—
In vain we look out, like the children in Thomson,
And say, in our innocence, "Surely he'll come soon!"

The reader may now turn to Mr. Forster's Memoir, written a few days after Lamb's death, when grief and recollection were alike fresh. A few passages, which Sir T. Talfourd seems to have adopted, have been omitted.

"Biographical Memoir of Charles Lamb.

"Charles Lamb was born in the Temple, in February, 1775. 'Tis my poor birthday,' says a letter of his we have lying before us, dated the 11th of February. The day will be rich hereafter to the lovers of wit and true genius. The place of his birth had greatly to do with his personal tastes in after life. Every one who has read "John Woodvil" cannot fail to have been struck (as in that loveliest of passages on the 'sports of the forest') with its exquisite sense of rural beauty and imagery. But Mr. Lamb's affection nevertheless turned downwards. Born under the shadow of St. Dunstan's steeple, he retained his love for it, and for the neighbouring town streets, to the last; and to the last he loved the very smoke of London, because, as he said, it had been the

medium most familiar to his vision. Anything, in truth, once felt, he never wished to change. When he made any alteration in his lodgings, the thing sadly discomposed him. His household gods, as he would say, planted a terrible fixed foot.

"This early habit, however, and this hatred of change, were not the only sources of his attachment to London, and to London streets. A sort of melancholy was often the source of Lamb's humour—a melancholy which, indeed, almost insensibly dashed his merriest writings—which used to throw out into still more delicate relief the subtleties of his wit and fancy, and which made his very jests to "scald like tears." In London there was some remedy for this, when it threatened to overmaster him. 'Often,' he said, 'when I have felt a weariness or distaste at home, have I rushed out into her crowded Strand, and fed my humour, till tears have wetted my cheek for unutterable sympathies with the multitudinous moving picture, which she never fails to present at all hours, like the scenes of a shifting pantomime.' This is a great and wise example for such as may be similarly afflicted.

"Mr. Lamb's earliest associates in London were Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Charles Lloyd, and others, who 'called Admiral Burney friend.' They used to assemble weekly at Burney's house, at the Queen's Gate, to chat and play whist; or they would meet to discuss supper, and the hopes of the world, at the Old Salutation Tavern. This was the '* * * * * * Inn,' to which Mr. Lamb makes so affectionate a reference in the dedication of his poems to Coleridge; this was the immortal tavern, and these were the 'old suppers in delightful years,' where he used to say Coleridge first kindled in him, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindliness;—quoting, with true enthusiasm—

'What words have I heard
Spoke at the Mermaid!'

Life was then, indeed, fresh to them all, and topics exhaustless; but yet there was one preferred before all others, because it included all. Mr. Lamb was at this period, indeed from the time he quitted Christ's Hospital to within nine years of his death, a clerk in the India House. It is scarcely pleasant to think of his constant labours there, when we think of the legacy of nobler writing of which they may have robbed the world. What have we to do now with all his—

'drops of labour spilt
On those huge and figured pages,
Which will sleep unclasp'd for ages,

Little knowing who did wield,
The quill that traversed their white field?'

Lines from a 'Poetical Epistle,' by Mr. Procter, who repaid Lamb's affection, felt towards him to the last, in a manner worthy of the hearts and the genius of both.

"But we have the better reason, perhaps, to be grateful for what has nevertheless been bequeathed to us. The genius of Mr. Lamb, as, developed in his various writings, takes rank with the most original of the age. As a critic, he stands *facile princeps*, in all the subjects he handled. Search English literature through, from its first beginnings till now, and you will find none like him. There is not a criticism he ever wrote that does not directly tell you a number of things you had no previous notion of. In criticism he was indeed, in all senses of the word, 'a discoverer—like Vasco Nunez or Magellan.' In that very domain of literature with which you fancied yourself most variously and closely acquainted, he would show you 'fresh fields and pastures new,' and these the most fruitful and delightful. For the riches he discovered were richer that they had lain so deep—the more valuable were they, when found, that they had eluded the search of ordinary men.

"As an Essayist, Charles Lamb will be remembered, in years to come, with Rabelais and Montaigne, with Sir Thomas Browne, with Steele, and with Addison. He unites many of the finest characteristics of these several writers. He has wisdom and wit of the highest order, exquisite humour, a genuine and cordial vein of pleasantry, and the most heart-touching pathos. In the largest acceptation of the word he is a humanist. No one of the great family of authors past and present has shown in matters the most important or the most trivial so delicate and extreme a sense of all that is human. It is the prevalence of this characteristic in his writings which has subjected him to occasional charges of want of imagination. This, however, is but half-criticism; for the matter of reproach may in fact be said to be his triumph. It was with a deep relish of Mr. Lamb's faculty that a friend of his once said, 'he makes the majesties of imagination seem familiar.' It is precisely thus with his own imagination. It eludes the observation of the ordinary reader in the very modesty of its truth, in its social and familiar air. His fancy as an Essayist is distinguished by singular delicacy and tenderness; and even his conceits, when they occur, will generally be found to be, as those of his favourite Fuller often are, steeped in human feeling and passion. The fondness he entertained for Fuller, for the author of the 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' and for other

writers of that class, was pure matter of temperament. His thoughts were always his own. Even when his words seem cast in the very mould of theirs, the perfect originality of his thinking is felt and acknowledged—we may add, in its superior wisdom, manliness, and unaffected sweetness. Every sentence in those Essays may be proved to be crammed full of thinking. The two volumes which contain them will be multiplied, we have no doubt, in the course of a few years, into as many hundred; for they contain a stock of matter which must be ever suggestive to more active minds, and will surely revisit the world in new shapes—an everlasting succession and variety of ideas. The past to him was not mere dry antiquity; it involved a most extensive and touching association of feelings and thoughts, reminding him of what we have been and may be, and seeming to afford a surer ground for resting on than the things which are here to-day and may be gone to-morrow. We know of no inquisition more curious, and no speculation more lofty, than may be found in the Essays of Charles Lamb. We know no place where conventional absurdities receive so little quarter; where stale evasions are so plainly exposed; where the barriers between names and things are at times so thoroughly flung down. And how could it indeed be otherwise? For it is truth which plays upon his writings like a genial and divine atmosphere. No need for them to prove what they would be at by any formal or logical analysis; no need for him to tell the world that this institution is wrong and that doctrine right; the world may gather from those writings their surest guide to judgment in these and all other cases—a general and honest appreciation of the humane and true.

"As a Poet, Mr. Lamb has left several things 'the world will not willingly let die.' Shall we not name first his prose tale of 'Rosamund Gray,' which we have read a dozen times, as well as we could for our tears? We will match this tale against the world for unequalled delicacy and pathos. Shall we not treasure up too in our heart of hearts the memory of 'John Woodvil,' of him who offended and was forgiven—and of the angelic, ever-honoured Margaret, whom miseries could never alienate, nor change of fortune shake, whom her lover's injuries 'and slights (the worst of injuries)' could not, in his days of shame, when all the world forsook him, make *her* forsake, or cease to cling with love stronger than death to her dear heart's lord, life's pride, soul-honoured John! These are destined to be everlasting creatures—once known, taken to the memory for ever. How exquisite is the tenderness with which, when questioned on John's neglect, she only turns aside for a moment with a tear, and afterwards

resumes her conversation cheerfully. How sublime is the reach of pathos with which Sir Walter Woodvil, betrayed to his enemies by his son, breaks his heart without uttering a single word. When the charge of an imitation of the elder poets is brought against Charles Lamb, it is generally brought in ignorance. His style, it is true, smacks to us of the antique; tasting with a genuine Beaumont and Fletcher flavour; but this was because his way of thinking was like theirs; there is no imitation in it, setting aside the occasional indulgence of his love for them, which we all feel to be delightful. We could fancy their loving *him* just in the same way, because he lived in precisely that world of thought which was chiefly theirs, and which changes not with the alterations of age or style, but is everlasting, and changes never. Mr. Hazlitt tells a story of a rural description out of 'John Woodvil,' quoted anonymously in a modern book, meeting the eye of Mr. Godwin, who was so struck with the beauty of the passage, and with a consciousness of having seen it before, that he was uneasy till he could recollect where, and after hunting in vain for it in Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and other not unlikely places, sent to Mr. Lamb to know if he could help him to the author! We should have recommended him in his search to look out for a higher sort of Heywood, some one between Heywood and Fletcher. When the day of popularity for these great writers shall come round again, Mr. Lamb's poetry will be popular too. His minor pieces are full of delicacy and wit, and read occasionally like one of his Essays.

"But it was not as a Critic, it was not as an Essayist, it was not as a poet, fervently as we entertained for him in these characters the admiration we have poorly endeavoured to express—it is not in any of these that we felt towards him the strongest feeling of devotion—we loved THE MAN. He was the most entirely delightful person we have ever known. He had no affectation, no assumption, no fuss, no cant, nothing to make him otherwise than delightful. His very foibles, as is remarked in a recent publication, were for the most part so small, and were engrafted so curiously upon a strong original mind, that we would scarcely have desired them away. They were a sort of fret-work, which let in light, and showed the form and order of his character. They had their origin in weakness of system chiefly; and that which we have heard by the unthinking condemned as wilful, in terms of severe reproach, was in the first instance nothing but a forced resort to aid that might serve to raise his spirits in society to what was no more than the ordinary pitch of all around him without it. Never should the natural temperament against which Mr. Lamb had to

struggle be forgotten by those who are left to speak of his habits and character. Of all the great and peculiar sorrows he was fated to experience through life (and there were many to which even an allusion may not here be made, and for which nearly his whole existence was offered as a willing and devoted sacrifice), the sorrows with which he was born were the greatest of all. His friends, whom he delighted by his wit, and enriched by his more serious talk, never knew the whole price he paid for those hours of social conversation. 'Reader,' he once said in a paper which, with some dash of fiction, conveyed his saddest personal experience, 'Reader, if you are gifted with nerves like mine, aspire to any character but that of a wit. When you find a tickling relish upon your tongue disposing you to that sort of conversation, especially if you find a preternatural flow of ideas setting in upon you at the sight of a bottle and fresh glasses, avoid giving way to it as you would fly your greatest destruction. If you cannot crush the power of fancy, or that within you which you mistake for such, divert it—give it some other play. Write an essay,—pen a character or description; —*but not as I do now—with tears trickling down your cheeks.*" We retire with reverence before the trials of such a spirit as this.

"No one in a conversation said such startling things as Lamb. No one was so witty or so sensible. No man ever had him at a disadvantage, except the man who did not understand him. He had a severe impediment in his speech, but this gave even an additional piquancy to the deep and eloquent things he said. After the stammering and hesitation, a half sentence would burst forth at the close, and set everybody laughing or thinking. And they would laugh at it, and think about it the next day, and the day after that. 'Lamb proves a truth,' said Hazlitt, 'in a play upon words." 'He was of the genuine line of Yorick," says the delightful writer of the *London Journal.* He was indeed;—or still more of the family of that ever-faithful and devoted 'fool' in 'Lear,' with his sayings of wisdom and snatches of old songs—'Young Lubin was a shepherd boy.' Who that was admitted to the intimacy of his acquaintance does not remember that and many others, and feel his heart sink with grief at our recent loss, though to rise again with pride in the consciousness of having been once admitted to such a friendship? We needed not to have made the restriction. Every one who knew him knew him intimately. He had no concealment, for he had nothing to conceal. He had the faculty,—as was remarked of him in the *Times* newspaper, by an old friend of his,—of turning 'even casual acquaintances into friends.' When you entered his little book-clad room, he welcomed you with an affectionate

greeting, set you down to something, and made you at home at once. His richest feasts, however, were those he served up from his ragged-looking books, his ungainly and dirty folios, his cobbled-up quartos, his squadrons of mean and squalid-looking duodecimos. 'So much the rather their celestial light shone inward.' How he would stutter forth their praises! What fine things he had to say about the beautiful obliquities of the 'Religio Medici,' about Burton, and Fuller, and Smollet, and Fielding, and Richardson, and Marvel, and Drayton, and fifty others, ending with the 'thrice-noble, chaste, and virtuous, but again somewhat fantastical and original brained Margaret Duchess of Newcastle!' What delightful reminiscences he had of the actors, how he used to talk of them, and how he has written them down!' How he would startle his friends by intruding on them lists of persons one would wish to have seen,—such odd alliances as Pontius Pilate and Doctor Faustus, Guy Faux and Judas Iscariot! But the evenings passed with him are not for the hasty mention of such articles as this.

"Mr. Lamb's personal appearance was remarkable. It quite realized the expectations of those who think that an author and a wit should have a distinct air, a separate costume, a particular cloth, something positive and singular about him. Such unquestionably had Mr. Lamb. Once he rejoiced in snuff-colour, but latterly his costume was inveterately black—with gaiters which seemed longing for something more substantial to close in. His legs were remarkably slight,—so indeed was his whole body, which was of short stature, but surmounted by a head of amazing fineness. We never saw any other that approached it in its intellectual cast and formation. Such only may be seen occasionally in the finer portraits of Titian. His face was deeply marked and full of noble lines—traces of sensibility, imagination, suffering, and much thought. His wit was in his eye, luminous, quick, and restless. The smile that played about his mouth was ever cordial and good-humoured; and the most cordial and delightful of its smiles were those with which he accompanied his affectionate talk with his sister, or his jokes against her. We have purposely refrained from speaking of that noble-minded and noble-hearted woman, because in describing her brother we describe her. Her heart and her intellect have been through life the counterpart of his own. The two have lived as one, in double singleness together. She has been, indeed, the supplement and completion of his existence. His obligations to her had extended beyond the period of his memory, and they accompanied him to his grave. Yet he returned them not unfittingly. The 'mighty debt of love he owed' was paid to her in full. When he

says otherwise in his charming sonnets to her, he merely expresses the ever-unsatisfied longings of true affection. Coleridge and she had the first and strongest holds upon his heart. In the pride of that first entrance into the world under the protection of his greater friend, he had not forgotten his sister. He dedicated all he had written to her. When, in after life, he had the power of acquitting his debt to her more nobly, by dedicating his whole existence to hers, he presented the offering of his poetry to Coleridge. Well might he express that strange and most touching wish, after the life they had led—'I wish that I could throw into a heap the remainder of our joint existences, that we might share them in equal division. But that is impossible!' It was indeed, and the survivor is not the most fortunate. Never more shall we see the picture they used to present—worth a hundred commonplaces of common existence—when they paid the occasional visits they both loved to London—never more see the affectionate and earnest watchings on her side—the pleasant evasions, the charming deference, and the little touches of gratitude on his! We recollect being once sent by her to seek 'Charles,' who had rambled away from her. We found him in the Temple, looking up, near Crown Office Row, at the house where he was born. Such was his ever-touching habit of seeking alliance with the scenes of old times. They were the dearer to him that distance had withdrawn them. He wished to pass his life among things gone by, yet not forgotten. We shall never forget the affectionate 'Yes, boy,' with which he returned our repeating his own striking lines—

> 'Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood,
> Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse!'

"This paper, long as it has already proved, must not be finished without the mention of one most honourable characteristic in which Mr. Lamb has stood alone, amidst all the political strife and personal bickerings of modern literature. He put himself in personal opposition to no one. He would recognise no difference of opinion as a plea against social meeting and friendly fellowship. 'It is an error,' he said, in a spirit of deep philosophy, 'more particularly incident to persons of the correctest principles and habits, to seclude themselves from the rest of mankind, as from another species, and form into knots and clubs. The best people, herding thus exclusively, are in danger of contracting a narrowness. Heat and cold, dryness and moisture, in the natural world, do not fly asunder, to split the globe into sectarian parts and separations; but mingling, as they best may, correct the malignity

of any single predominance. The analogy holds, I suppose, in the moral world. If all the good people were to ship themselves off to terra-incognitas, what, in humanity's name, is to become of the refuse?' Charles Lamb wrote in periodicals of all opinions, and held all differing friends firmly and cordially by the hand, as if indeed of one family of brothers. His friendship with Southey did not shake his intimacy with the editor of the *Examiner*, or move him one jot from the side of Hazlitt. This friendship however, was once interrupted for some time by some wilful fancy on the part of the irritable and world-soured philosopher. At this time Southey happened to pay a compliment to Lamb at the expense of some of his companions, Hazlitt among them. The faithful and unswerving heart of the other, forsaking not, although forsaken, refused a compliment at such a price, and sent it back to the giver. The character of William Hazlitt, which he wrote at the same time, may stand for ever as one of the proudest and truest evidences of the writer's heart and intellect. It brought back, at once, the repentant offender to the arms of his friend, and nothing again separated them till Death came. Charles Lamb was, we believe, the only one of his old associates seen at the grave of Hazlitt.

"His first appearance in literature was by the side of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He came into his first battle, as he tells us (literature is a sort of warfare), under cover of that great Ajax. Their friendship in life survived all the accidents of place and time; and in death it has been but a few short months divided. We should like to see this remarkable friendship (remarkable in all respects and in all its circumstances) between two of the finest and most original geniuses in an age of no common genius, worthily and lastingly recorded. It would outvalue, in the mind of posterity, whole centuries of literary quarrels.

"Lamb never fairly recovered the death of Coleridge. He thought of little else (his sister was but another portion of himself) until his own great spirit joined his friend's. He had a habit of venting his melancholy in a sort of mirth. He would, with nothing graver than a pun, 'cleanse his bosom of the perilous that weighed' upon it. In a jest, or a few light phrases, he would lay open the recesses of his heart. So in respect of the death of Coleridge. Some old friends of his saw him two or three weeks ago, and remarked the constant turning and reference of his mind. He interrupted himself and them almost every instant with some play of affected wonder or humorous melancholy on the words '*Coleridge is dead.*' Nothing could divert him from that,

for the thought of it never left him. About the same time, we had written to him to request a few lines for the literary album of a gentleman who entertained a fitting admiration of his genius. It was the last request we were destined to make, the last kindness we were allowed to receive! He wrote in Mr. Keymer's volume, and wrote of Coleridge. This, we believe, was the last production of his pen. A strange and not unenviable chance, which saw him, at the end of his literary pilgrimage, as he had been at the beginning,—in that immortal company. We are indebted, with the reader, to the kindness of our friend for permission to print the whole of what was written. It would be impertinence to offer one remark on it. Once read, its noble and affectionate tenderness will be remembered for ever. Let it be placed over the mortal grave of Coleridge.

"'When I heard of the death of Coleridge, it was without grief. It seemed to me that he long had been on the confines of the next world,—that he had a hunger for eternity. I grieved then that I could not grieve. But since, I feel how great a part he was of me. His great and dear spirit haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men or books, without an ineffectual turning and reference to him. He was the proof and touchstone of all my cogitations. He was a Grecian (or in the first form) at Christ's Hospital, where I was deputy Grecian; and the same subordination and deference to him I have preserved through a life-long acquaintance. Great in his writings, he was greatest in his conversation. In him was disproved that old maxim, that we should allow every one his share of talk. He would talk from morn to dewy eve, nor cease till far midnight, yet who ever would interrupt him,—who would obstruct that continuous flow of converse, fetched from Helicon or Zion? He had the tact of making the unintelligible seem plain. Many who read the abstruser parts of his "Friend" would complain that his works did not answer to his spoken wisdom. They were identical. But he had a tone in oral delivery, which seemed to convey sense to those who were otherwise imperfect recipients. He was my fifty years' old friend without a dissension. Never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see again. I seem to ove the house he died at more passionately than when he lived. I love the faithful Gilmans more than while they exercised their virtues towards him living. What was his mansion is consecrated to me a chapel.

'Chs. Lamb.

'Edmonton, November 24, 1834.'

"Within five weeks of this date Charles Lamb died. It is some consolation to add, that, during his illness, which lasted four days, he suffered no pain, and that his faculties remained with him to the last. A few words spoken by him the day before he died showed with what quiet collectedness he was prepared to meet death.

"These are strange words to be writing of our old friend! We can scarcely think yet that he has left us; so intimately does he seem to belong to household thoughts, and to the dear things of heart and hearth, which his writings have made yet dearer. We cannot fancy him gone from his folios, his 'midnight darlings,' his pictures, chit-chat, jokes, and ambiguities;—and yet it is so. Everything that was mortal of him is gone, except the tears and the love of his friends. His writings remain, to be the delight of thousands to come."

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